

EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

BETRAYED BY A MOCCASIN

THERE ON THE SHORE OF
THE LAKE LAY A MOCCASIN.
IT WAS GAILY TRIMMED WITH
MANY PARTI-COLORED BEADS.



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BETRAYED BY A MOCCASIN

OR

The Round-up of the Indian Smugglers

By COL. SPENCER DAIR

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS OF THIS STORY.

CAPTAIN ARTHUR HUDSON—A wonderful, resourceful, fighting captain of the great "American Scouts," whose life as a faro dealer, in the "Bank Exchange," in Yellow Knife, British North America, to his final victory over the Indian Smugglers is a long story of great deeds.

ALMA HAMPTON—Little, brown-haired, pretty, but a frontier girl with courage to fight for her own salvation. The conspiracy against her, which she and Captain Arthur Hudson outwit by pluck, and superior generalship, is a tale of clever counter-plotting.

CHIEF HARICART—A Sioux Indian. A type of educated Indian that makes trouble when the education is backed by a crooked disposition. Chief Haricart led the great band of Indian Smugglers so skillfully that for years neither Canadian or American authorities could "get him right." His smuggling depredations at length caused his downfall, after baffling his enemies for years.

JEAN TESSIER—A French-Canadian thug, second in command of a band of Indian Smugglers to Chief Haricart.

PIERRE HUISSIER, ALIAS "THE LEAPING PANTHER"—A North-Western "bad-man" ready to shoot any time.

"OLD BILL" HAMPTON—Father of pretty Alma Hampton.

Owner of the "Bank Exchange," the main gambling hell in Yellow Knife, on Great Slave Lake, British North America.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS WILLOUGHBY STUBBS, ALIAS "STUBSEY"—A "Noo Yoik" newsboy on his way to make his fortune in the Klondike. He is a New Yorker, proud of it, and is "all wool and a yard wide."

"PINK" MALTBY—Driver of the Fort Rae Stage Coach, one of the old methods of locomotion which the railroad is fast pushing back toward the great Arctic circle. A man of this day where not a thing on earth made him afraid.

"KENO" PHELPS—Guard of the treasure box of the Fort Rae coach, which contained \$500,000. His brave defence of his treasure owned by the Hudson Bay Company, the greatest fur-trading organization in the world, makes a thrilling tale.

LONG FOOT, ALIAS "INDIAN JOE"—A Blackfeet Indian, with a record.

HOWLING WOLF—A Sioux Indian, who would sell his eyes for the white-man's "whisky."

"DUTCH FRITZ"—A tender-foot, who wishes he was not, right now. He gets his greatest surprise at Yellow Knife.

CHAPTER I.

"QUEEN WINS!"

"Ace wins!"

"Tray loses!"

"Queen wins!"

The "look-out" in the Bank Exchange, the main gambling hell in the tiny trading post of Yellow Knife droned out his words in a long, sleepy drawl.

"You're a liar! The queen loses. This faro game is crooked."

Every person in the room came to instant attention. "Liar" is a shooting work in Yellow Knife.

Jean Tessier, bad-man, gambler, drunkard, smuggler and thief, thrust his hand back to the huge revolver which swung in its holster far to the left of his right hip, where he could touch it in a breath.

With a motion quicker than that of a wild cat when leaping on its prey, Tessier's hand bristled with his

great 45-caliber Army revolver, cocked and ready for instant action.

No one moved, now in the room.

Every person stood at gaze around the long green baize covered table. A crafty half breed Indian did not change the expression of his face. A trapper, fresh from trackless wilds in search of priceless furs, laughed with sheer lust to see a killing. A trader in contraband whisky winked at the man opposite him, a white "bad-man" whose evil reputation kept him out of even the usually unquestioning frontier towns.

"Ward off the shot by taking it in your arm," whispered the Indian to Arthur Hudson, faro dealer, who had been accused of cheating while dealing faro, a far greater crime in the greater North-West than murder.

"Nonsense," replied Hudson. "The fellow is crazy with drink. The game is a square one."

He gazed directly at Tessier with a shrug of his shoulder.

Where Yellow Knife River enters Great Slave Lake, just where begins MacLeod Bay, in Mackenzie territory, British North America, men are merely atoms in the half million square miles of plains, mountains, and forest, that make up the splendidly wild country.

A dead man snuffed from life by a pistol shot was no novelty in Yellow Knife, Hudson knew.

Yet he did not quail. He gazed again at Tessier and once more shrugged his shoulders.

Between Tessier's beady eyes came to the sight of all, that little contraction which showed that the shot was coming.

Covered as he was by the weapon of the drink crazed ruffian, Hudson knew that his slightest move to draw his own weapon would be the last he ever consciously made. So he sat still. It was a fine exhibition of pure courage.

There came the sound of quick steps in the silent room. With the steps was heard the swish of a woman's gown.

Into the tempest whirled a girl. No female amazon this that came like a flash of vivid lightning, but a dainty, brown haired, blue eyed winsome little woman, whom Tessier could have crushed with one hand.

She did not give the thug a chance for thought. Under his outstretched arm she darted. Her white hand grasped Tessier's wrist. With a quick motion she wrenched the deadly revolver he held upwards.

Flash! Bang!

The revolver roared its message of death as it exploded. But its leaden freight went whirling into the ceiling. No one was hurt.

The girl wrenched open the revolver. She quickly extracted all of the cartridges. Then she opened her own battery, her tongue. It was a very effective weapon. Tessier cringed under its swift explosion.

"You drunken loafer," shrieked the girl. "Coming into my father's decent place and accusing us of running a crooked faro game. Why you ought to be shot. Then you start kicking up a muss."

Tessier opened his mouth to speak. Nothing but a gasp came however.

"Now you get out of here," cried the girl, a very furv as she spoke. "We don't stand for any such cattle as you are around here. Get out I say!"

The girl turned to the listening crowd at the faro table.

"Boys," she shouted. "Since 'Old Bill' Hampton,

my father, opened this saloon ten years ago, has any one ever before hinted that our faro game was crooked?"

Every head shook in protest.

"Then comes this man, Jean Tessier," added the girl, "he is ruining the reputation of our place."

Alma Hampton burst into tears. It was a call upon the demand of the sympathy of her audience met with instant response.

"Don't cry," said the Indian, whose name in the Blackfeet tribe was "Long Foot," but who was known only as Indian Joe, among the whites of Yellow Knife. "We know you Alma Hampton to be as square as your dad, 'Old Bill' Hampton. We don't believe Tessier."

"Why not examine these cards?" came the soft voice of Arthur Hudson, the faro dealer. "They haven't been touched since Tessier spoke."

"That's the talk," cried Pierre Huissier, the "bad-man" known among the Indians of the territory as "The Leaping Panther." "Alma is right. Let's skin over the cards."

In a few seconds the entire party bent over the cards. Hudson made way for them without a word.

"The dealin' box is square," announced Huissier, after a rigid examination. "There's no double spring to it. It is straight as they make 'em."

"Take all the cards up," insisted Alma Hampton. "Make each play over again. See just what happened up to the time Tessier chipped in with his dirty charges of crooked work."

"I was right, Alma," put in Tessier, who now began to hedge when he saw the crowd in the room had begun to side with Alma Hampton. "You're all right, and so is 'Old Bill' but that there Hudson is the crooked one. I saw him shift the cards so as to win. I had five good American dollars on the Queen to win."

A roar shook the ceiling and rafters of the room from the crowd.

"Five dollars?" shouted Huissier. "Good Lordy! Why didn't you bet your small change first?"

"You tin horn sport," cried Alma. "Is all this fuss about a poor little five spot? Why here, there's a fiver for you, run off to the candy shop and buy your marbles."

Tessier wilted under the girl's sarcasm.

"But it was all the money I had," he explained.

Another roar went up from the crowd.

"Did Mama give you the five for your spending money?" jeered one.

"Don't you let her get away with your cash," cried another. "I've no hope that you will ever see another fiver," put in another of the crowd.

"If you will ask the case-keeper to call each play from his rack," mildly insisted Hudson, "we can trace all the plays back, and see whether the queen did not rightly win."

The expert's advice was taken. It was seen that only a few passes had been made and that soon the cards were narrowed down to the disputed play.

"Now all watch," requested Alma.

"Ace wins!"

"King loses!"

"Queen wins!"

Thus again droned the "lookout."

"A perfectly straight game," decided Huissier, as chairman of the investigating committee. "Here, you Tessier, do you hear that? You're in wrong."

"You'd better apologize to this here, Hudson," remarked Huissier at this point.

"Or fight him," fiercely put in a tall figure that had silently entered the wide main door to the gambling place without being observed.

All turned as the words rang through the room.

The speaker was Chief Haricart, one of the most desperate of the great crowd of desperadoes that made up the company that night. Tall, copper colored, with fierce roving black eyes, that snapped with rage at an enemy, or could grow soft as a woman's when talking to a friend, he stood towering above the company, a very fury in mien.

"There is only one answer to the word 'liar,'" Chief Haricart continued. "It's a shot from a good gun."

"That's so," rejoined Huissier. Between Chief Haricart and Huissier a lightning glance had flashed. They seemed then to each take a certain position in the conversation that followed.

"Will you fight?" asked Huissier of Tessier.

Fleeting, yet to the watching eyes of Alma Hudson most apparent, came a second glance. It darted from Chief Haricart to Tessier and was gone. It was so illusive that Alma hardly could believe that she had really seen it.

But she drew Hudson aside.

"Be very careful," she whispered. "This looks like a plant. They have cooked up this whole affair. Tessier was sent here for some reason, I am sure, to trump up charges that you were dealing a crooked game. He was instructed to kill you. If I hadn't interfered he would have done it."

"You are right, Alma," replied Hudson. "I saw it was a plant in a moment."

"Why didn't you shoot Tessier when he spoke? You had a chance to get the drop on him."

"I know it. But when I looked out of the window over Tessier's head I saw Chief Haricart loafing on the veranda of the 'White Dog' saloon. You know as well as I do that where Chief Haricart is there's always a dirty plot going on. I knew he was jobbing me right there."

"I see," answered Alma. "But what shall we do?"

"I know what I will do," rejoined Hudson.

"Well."

"I shall fight. A man who won't fight in Yellow Knife, had better pull out of town between two days. He's worse than a homeless tramp in a police station, you know. Of course I shall fight Tessier."

"My God! Is there no other way?"

"None. Why, Alma, I'm ashamed of you. You know if I don't fight that the 'Bank Exchange' will lose this gang's patronage, and no one else will come to take their places. How would you all live?"

"I don't care how we live. Most anything is better than this life," replied Alma with a sob. "Why will my father keep in such close connection with this gang. It's suspected that Chief Haricart is only a common smuggler, and we know he is a murderer, and a black-guard generally."

"That's it," replied Hudson. "That's why they have cooked up this muss. They know that I suspect them. They know that I know that they are smugglers. The easiest way to get rid of a suspicious man is to kill him. So they have cooked up this trouble to get rid of me."

"I see you must fight," replied the girl, "but be careful. Don't get killed."

"Never fear," came the swift reply. "No smuggler can snuff my light out."

Chief Haricart crossed the room to where Hudson stood.

"Will the gambling coward fight?" said the Chief "or is he hiding behind a woman's skirts?"

A flash of anger crossed Hudson's face. It was gone in a moment. His face was calm and his eyes steady.

"Yes, I will fight," Hudson answered. "But as the challenged party I have the right to choose weapons and make the conditions for the duel."

Chief Haricart bowed. But his shifty eyes wavered. There was something about the quiet pose of Hudson that he could not understand. It boded danger to his schemes.

"You have the right to make terms, and name weapons," the Chief said finally.

"I name 45-caliber revolvers, Army make," snapped Hudson.

"It is well," replied Chief Haricart.

"With these weapons, two revolvers to each man, I claim the right to name the condition that Jean Tessier and I are locked in this room, alone with all windows and doors barred, and that we fight our duel in the dark with no light anywhere. It is further to be a duel to the death. If our shots do not kill, we are to be given a supply of extra cartridges after what we start with are used up."

Chief Haricart, who seldom was surprised gave back a step. This plan was more serious than he intended. It placed his greatest friend, and next in command, in his band of thugs, too near the danger zone to be pleasing. But Haricart dared not refuse Hudson's terms. There were too many witnesses present who disliked the Haricart following in the community to allow even a show of the white feather, to become apparent.

Haricart flashed a glance at Tessier. That worthy was standing open mouthed listening to the conversation. It was one thing to kill a man in a sudden brawl with all the odds in his favor, and another to fight him locked in a dark room, to the death.

But Tessier saw the dilemma in which he was placed. He gave Hudson a glance of mingled fear and wrath.

"All right," he cried, "I'll fight you any old way. And I will kill you, you lily fingered gambler."

"We will see," replied Hudson. "Who will furnish the weapons to be used?"

"Let each man use his own," put in Pierre Huissier. "But let me look over the guns."

Tessier handed over his big revolvers for inspection. They were pronounced to be fair and perfect, after a minute overhauling by Huissier.

"I have no Army 45," said Hudson. "In fact I don't carry any gun as a usual thing."

The crowd was surprised. Not to carry a weapon in that part of the world was looked upon as a good way of committing suicide.

"I'll loan you my guns," said Huissier "they are good goods. I've used 'em a lot. They have never failed. If they had I wouldn't be here."

"I accept your offer, with thanks," replied Hudson. "But I claim one privilege. Tessier knows his weapons. He has used them often. I don't know the guns Huissier is to loan me. I claim the right to try them right here, before I fight."

They all assented to this plan.

With a speed simply marvelous Hudson grasped the weapon. He did not take aim, but "fanned" each gun in his hand. With a peculiar twisting motion of the wrist he whirled the huge weapon about in a tiny circle.

As the hammer came up against his thumb he loosened it without using the trigger. The weapon thus exploded in a rattling crash. It sounded like the long roll of a drum. The room was filled with smoke. The weapons barked and sang.

From one hand bullets spat here and there. Lights were shot out with unerring aim.

The other hand gave out its leaden hail exactly at the same moment. A goblet that stood on the faro table tinkled and fell away into a mass of broken glass, as a bullet hit its stem.

A rack of red, blue, and white faro chips stood near the goblet. Hudson dropped one revolver. He sent four chips up toward the ceiling with one hand. In the other the revolver spat, flashed and sang.

As each chip soared in air a bullet from Hudson's weapon sent it whirling into space.

Never had anyone in that crowd of crack shots seen such shooting. It was as if a demon from the underworld had suddenly turned loose. Every face looked aghast. Here was a new element among them. This quiet, easy going gambler was the most wonderful necromancer ever seen in Yellow Knife, with a revolver.

With a final shot which carried away across the room and knocked a stuffed humming bird from its perch in a corner, Hudson stopped his fusillade.

Jean Tessier was white with wrath and surprise. Chief Haricart was puzzled. He dared not let his friend and lieutenant face a man who could shoot thus. But he also dared not appear to shield Tessier from the duel.

"Ho! Ho!" he shouted. "Hudson you're a fine shot. This thing has gone far enough. You and Tessier make up. I do not wish you to fight. We have proved Hudson to be a brave man, and Tessier you were wrong. He did not deal crooked faro. Apologize, right now. Then every one take a drink with me. I pay for it all."

Hudson flashed a glance at Alma. She hurried to his side.

"What shall I do?" Hudson asked.

"Drop it. Do not urge the matter further. If Haricart does not wish to carry on the fight, it's our play to give in. We are at the mercy of that gang, you see. Father is so mixed up with them that I dare not move lest I betray his interests."

"I see."

Hudson turned to the crowd.

"Alma advises me not to carry this matter further," he said quietly. "I am willing to fight or not, just as Chief Haricart decides. I will fight him or Tessier, or any of his gang. But Alma does not wish further brawling. There will be no fight."

Hudson rushed over to Tessier. He grasped him by his arm. With a magnificent exhibition of sheer strength, one would not think possible from his slight form, he picked up the burly ruffian, as a cat does its kitten and with one great heave hurled Tessier through a window into the outer darkness.

Window glass, sash, and all melted like the mist as Tessier crashed against it. The thug's body could be

heard rolling and tumbling down the sloping hill on which the saloon stood.

"I take no apologies from your kind of cattle," cried Hudson to Chief Haricart. "I drop the fight because Alma Hampton requests it. She is the daughter of my employer, 'Old Bill' Hampton. But my answer to the charge of being a crooked faro dealer, is made. I hurled the dog who dared voice it out with the rest of the coyote's. He got what was his just due."

A great roar of congratulation swept over the crowd in the room. They hurried to congratulate Hudson, who now became a hero in their eyes.

Chief Haricart vanished to look after his fallen follower.

"Look out," cried Alma to Hudson. "Tessier may try to shoot you through the window if he isn't dead."

The girl was right.

A shot rang out as she spoke. A flame lighted up the outer darkness. It came from Jean Tessier's weapon.

CHAPTER II.

"HE MUST DIE."

"Drop that shooting."

Chief Haricart hissed these words into the ear of Jean Tessier just in time to stop a second shot.

"You fool," the Chief added, "what are you thinking of. You will spoil all our plans."

"I don't care," replied Tessier. "I'll kill that gambler right here."

Haricart saw it was time to interfere. He dragged his infuriated follower down the hill side at top speed, meanwhile imprisoning the fellow's arms so that he could not shoot.

"Try and get yourself together," commanded the Chief. "You can settle Hudson later. Remember that we have work to do."

Tessier finally began listening to reason. He had fallen into a soft clump of sage brush, and was unhurt save for minor bruises and scratches.

"I'll kill that gambler on sight," he frothed.

"Nonsense," rejoined Haricart. "You are to blame. You had the drop on him and the crowd with you, when you yelled out that he was a crooked faro dealer. If you had shot him then you would have been able in the excitement to have got at the cards, mussed them in the pack, and there could have been no investigation of the truth of your charges."

"That wild cat of an Alma Hampton is to blame," snarled Tessier. "She jumped me and got my gun."

"Hell!"

"Yes she did. I didn't dare to shoot after that. The gang would have lynched me if I had."

"Well we'll reckon with that girl some day," replied Haricart. "You can have your revenge on Hudson too. The two are in together on this deal. They both suspect us. If that girl gets working on her father, 'Old Bill' Hampton, there will be the devil to pay. He may blow us to the authorities at Fort Rae."

"Bosh," replied Tessier, "what can they do at Fort Rae. They have only ten people in the Fort that are not part of us, and one is the Hudson Bay Company agent. The other two are members of the North-West Mounted Police. The rest are fur traders and scouts who are only afraid of us because they are not with us. If we asked them they'd join our party right away."

"I know," replied Haricart. "But there's one element I don't understand and which I fear greatly."

"What's that?"

"Those new American Scouts."

"Who the — are they? I never heard of them."

"Well I have, more's the pity."

"Tell me about them."

"They are a recently organized body of men picked for extreme bravery by the American Secret Service Chief in Washington. You know there's been a lot of smuggling going on between British North America and the United States besides that of our gang."

"Yes."

"The American Scouts make it pretty hard to get over the border line now days. We are stopped in Montana now, and find hard work shooting our stuff over North Dakota's line."

"Then there's those confounded North-West Police," snarled Tessier. "It's getting hard to get a living."

"Have you heard from our camp," said Haricart. "Things all right there?"

"Yes," answered Tessier. "A runner saw me this morning. He said things were all right there. They have got a lot of furs ready to ship over the border."

"What's in the lot?"

"Sable, ermine, beaver, mink, and otter, mostly. The boys stole the lot from a trapper going to Fort Providence to sell his year's work to the Hudson's Bay Company agent there."

"What is the lot worth?"

"Fifty thousand dollars delivered in New York city. They aren't worth anything here. We might sell 'em to the Hudson Bay Company. They control all the skin buying up here. But they wouldn't give us much, and I'm afraid to deal with them at that. They might ask when Chief Haricart had turned trapper."

"Are you not afraid of the trapper you robbed?"

"Afraid? What do you mean?"

"Won't he put up a holler and bring down the authorities on us?"

"Not much. Dead men tell no tales. I shot the trapper myself when he was asleep. Then I took the skins over to our camp."

Chief Haricart nodded. His was the indirect path always. He pretended to know little about the work of his gang of smugglers. Thus he questioned Tessier making it appear that Tessier was the leader, he the dupe.

"That would be a good clean up," Haricart added. "Fifty thousand dollars will look nice when we distribute it among us."

"I've got a bigger scheme than that," whispered Tessier.

"You have? Unfold it."

"It's about 'Old Bill' Hampton's daughter."

"Well what of her?"

"'Old Bill's' pretty well fixed isn't he?"

"Guess he is. Been running the gambling hell and saloon for some years—guess he has a pretty good bank-roll laid aside."

"Why not get it?"

"How?"

"It's dead easy. Let's abduct the girl some night."

"What good will that do?"

"Take her up to the camp. Hold her there for ransom. 'Old Bill' will put up a lot of cash to get her back home. He thinks his eyes and all of Alma."

Haricart considered. The plan might be a good one. Yet it had better be thought over carefully before being put in effect.

"The plan looks good to me at first glance," Haricart added, "but we had better think it over a bit before we do anything drastic."

"I like the idea," replied Tessier. "I'd like to take a hand in taming that little she wild cat myself."

"How about Hudson?"

"Can't do it if he is around here. Better kill him first."

"I hate a killing. There's some people you can kill and have no come back for you; there's others you can't, 'cause friends get busy. I haven't got Hudson sized up yet. Got to wait to see whether we are not in wrong if we kill him."

Tessier snorted in rage. But he agreed to not try his plan out until Haricart had given him permission.

"You see," explained Tessier, "there's been a big lot of killings here this past six months. Yellow Knife is getting a bad name all over the territory. Trappers won't come here now. They go direct to the Forts on Great Slave Lake. We don't get first whack at their furs unless they stop here. They say up at Fort Rae if you want to die quick take a pack of furs to Yellow Knife."

"Have you heard how the last pack of our goods ran the Montana border?" questioned Tessier.

"No I haven't. The Fort Rae coach is due today. It carries mail, and there ought to be a letter on board telling us what was the fate of our last shipment."

"I suppose the coach will bring up a lot of cash in its treasure box?"

"Sure as you're born."

"What makes you say that?"

"I've got a straight tip that it carries half a million in cold cash."

"Gosh! We could use that in our business."

"But we can't get to it."

"How does so much cash come on this trip?"

"It's sent up to Fort Rae from Fort Churchill by the Hudson Bay Company to meet the demands at Fort Rae."

"What demands?"

"Trappers are coming in to the Fort now from all over the territory with their winters catch of furs."

"Yes."

"They sell the furs to the Hudson Bay Company, hence, there must be in Fort Rae the cash to pay for the furs. The Fort Rae agent of the company makes an estimated report to the company's branch at Fort Churchill. Then the cash is sent by coach."

"It's guarded. You bet, it's guarded, eh?"

"Of course. 'Keno' Phelps is the guard over this, the Yellow Knife division of the stage line; stage line stock all owned by fur trading company, so if any one gets after the treasure he's got a pretty come-back awaiting him."

"You're always fearing a come-back?"

"Why not?"

"You're a sort of scared crook, eh?"

"Not a bit of one. Only what's the use of breaking into a jail by taking on the impossible things. I plan carefully, and keep out of trouble. You would take chances any minute and land in jail the next."

Tessier snarled an oath. He knew however, that Haricart was right. The Sioux was so careful in making plans, that his gang had grown to be almost in-

vincible. It was noted as being a gang of Indian and white smugglers, but with all its evil reputation, the authorities had never as yet, been able to "get the gang right" and jail it for its misdeeds.

Aside from this fact Tessier did not see that Haricart was so wily that he let his subordinates often plan, knowing that their plans would end in their single arrest.

"It's an easy way to get rid of a man from my crowd that I am suspicious of," often thought Haricart. "Let him plan out his own campaign. If he gets in jail he hasn't me to blame."

An arch hypocrite, Haricart held the policy of sacrificing any single member of his gang, any time, to save his own wily neck.

Tessier's mind reverted to the half million of money in the treasure box of the Fort Rae coach. His imagination was fired with pictures of what he could do in the way of a career of vice if he only had the money in his own possession.

"Hully Geel!" he said, "I know a dandy place to stop that coach in."

"Where?" asked Haricart.

"You know where the Fort Rae Road leaves Yellow Knife about a mile or so above here?"

"Yes."

"I mean the piece of road that runs through the Point Escatado bluff?"

"Yes, I know."

"That would be a dandy place for a hold up."

"I suppose it would."

"You bet it would. The bluff is a sheer precipice of solid rock. It towers up two hundred feet high and is thickly covered by woods."

"I know."

"Half way down the bluff the road winds along, over which the coach has to pass."

"Well?"

"The road runs two hundred and fifty feet above the waters of the Yellow Knife."

"Well what of it?"

"Nothing, except when the coach enters that narrow stretch of road hewed as it is from the solid rock, high up along the face of that precipice, there is no chance to turn back. You've got to go ahead. There's no chance to scale the inaccessible sides of that great canyon above. A turn to the right would hurl the coach and all on board to an awful death in the Yellow Knife River far below."

"Exactly?"

"Now you remember what I say. If we don't take a chance on this trip and Hold Up that coach and get that half million, some one else will. It's too fat a thing for some one not to slip over."

"Now you forget it," said Haricart. "You forget all that quick. There's too much risk for us to figure in any such a game."

Tessier swore again with fierce accents.

"Now you listen to reason," continued Haricart. "We are in bad enough as it is. You made such a bad play of it all in the Bank Exchange. Why Hudson ought to be stretched out on a board awaiting burial this minute if you had not bungled. Now we have got to make peace with Alma Hampton and Hudson. The girl's father is too necessary to us just now, to risk a tangle with his daughter."

"I don't see it."

"You don't—why"—Haricart remembered that

Tessier knew nothing of the exact relations between him and "Old Bill" "w-h-y, well you see it's a secret of 'Old Bill's,' so I can't tell you the dead inside, but you take it from me that it's up to me to make a pow-wow of peace with the whole Hampton crowd."

"Why don't you go ahead and make up—them people seem to be pretty strong out here—and why don't you kow-tow to Arthur Hudson too?"

"Nonsense." Haricart looked sharply at Tessier. "Now look here, Jean," he went on. "Don't you think I'm going to make peace except for business reasons. You needn't fear that your little private quarrel is going to interfere with my plans. I won't let it. Take that from me."

"You can't stop my killing Hudson," said Tessier doggedly.

"I don't want to. I would rather have you kill him than not, but I don't want you to kill him at the wrong time; that is at the time that will make us all trouble."

"I don't want to make trouble."

"Of course, you don't, Jean. Now I will see that you get Hudson in due time. I think your plan to abduct Alma Hampton for the purpose of getting at 'Old Bill's' savings a pretty good one. But Alma is pretty popular through the entire territory. We must move carefully or every trapper, the American Scouts, the North-West Mounted Police, and all of the whites of the territory will be at our heels. You wait. I'll get up a scheme that will give you your revenge, and also will give you and the gang a lot of cash. But don't you make a move until I make up the plan."

Tessier nodded.

"What's that noise," he asked a moment later.

Both men listened intently.

The rattle of wheels, and the tramp of horses at high speed met their ears.

"There comes the Fort Rae coach," said Haricart. "They will stop an hour at the coach station down below to feed. Then they will start. I will hustle over and see if the letter we are awaiting is aboard."

"Don't forget to make peace with the Hampton's," sneered Tessier.

"And to plan out your revenge on Hudson as well," replied Haricart.

CHAPTER III.

ALMA HAMPTON'S PLAN.

Tessier's shot grazed Arthur Hudson's forehead leaving a seared scar upon it, but luckily did not pierce his brain.

"A close shave," Hudson said. Alma, used to sudden brawls, saw quickly that the gambler was not hurt.

"Jump back quick," she shouted, "there may be a second shot coming. That hound will kill you if he can. You have got to get him or he will get you."

Hudson jumped back from out of range of the broken window through which he had plunged the unlucky Tessier.

"He won't shoot again," Hudson said. "Tessier is a simple assassin. If one of his kind don't get you at first they never risk a second shot just then, sneaks as they are. One might fire back at them."

"Now remember," warned Alma, "You haven't been in the North-West very long and you don't know our methods. The first chance you get you shoot Jean

Tessier. It's the only way to save your life. And be careful. You must look out for his assassin's methods. He is a French Canadian, brought up in Chief Haricart's wigwam."

"Is Haricart an Indian?" questioned Hudson in surprise.

"Full blooded Sioux," replied Alma. "He was born in Montana. He is one of those educated Indians that use the veneer of the whites as cloaks to his Indian deviltry."

"Tell me about him."

"He was the son of Tall Hunter, a noted chief of the Sioux's, and after the Sioux were practically exterminated by General Canby, the American Indian fighter, Haricart was adopted by some of those societies that think they can make a good Indian out of a Sioux."

"Yes."

"He went to an Indian college, and when he was graduated, got mixed up in a murder the first thing after he got back to his old home. He shot a white man I think over a trifling quarrel. He fled for the only refuge possible out in the vastness of this wild country."

"What is he doing now?"

"I can not really answer you. I don't exactly know. But he has surrounded himself with a band of fifty Indians, white men, who are so tough that white friends are impossible,—men like Tessier, for instance. Haricart has a sort of camp on Great Slave Lake, but far up toward the West away from the Forts, that dot it. There he lives with his band. I don't know how."

"By smuggling, I suppose," ventured Hudson.

"I suspect so. The gang are very thick with my father. They have some bond in common, and I can think of nothing but that one. Haricart is very cunning, you know. He doesn't get into trouble himself, mark you, but allows the brunt of trouble to strike any members of his gang."

"Are the authorities ever able to catch him?"

"There's precious little authority except one's own gun way out here in the frontier," replied Alma. "There's the North-West Mounted Police. They have done something toward quelling the terrible lawlessness that is reigning here, but it's only crimes against the Canadian Government that they track. They have raided Haricart's camp several times, but he always managed to sacrifice one of his band and get off himself."

"Does not his band suspect?"

"I fancy not. He is cute and treacherous. He is the worst thing on earth, an educated sly sneak of a Sioux Indian."

"Hush," whispered Hudson. "Here comes Chief Haricart now."

Hardly had the words been spoken than the subject of the conversation entered the room.

Chief Haricart's little beady eyes roved from Alma and back again to Hudson. There was a world of insulting suspicion in his eyes.

"Did I interrupt—now surely I did not interrupt a courtship?" he asked with a smirk.

"No, you didn't interrupt a courtship," sneered Alma, "and if you did I don't think it any of your business. I'm free to be courted by any man. You can't court any decent woman, with all your wives back there in the camp."

"I meant no offence," rejoined the Chief. "I was willing to depart if I was in the way."

"You are always in the way of honest people," snapped Alma.

"Now Miss Alma, pray don't," added the Chief. "I am here to apologize for the conduct of my friend Jean Tessier. He was beside himself with drink. He forgot himself."

"And got flung through a window, no matter whether he needed the sash or not," added Alma gaily. "Anyway he took it along with him. And he was tossed out by a good American citizen."

"Are you an American?" asked Haricart directly of Hudson.

"I certainly am, and am proud of the fact," replied Hudson.

A spasm of suspicion swept over Haricart's face.

"What are you doing in Yellow Knife?" he asked.

"Am I on the witness stand that I must answer you?" rejoined Hudson.

"Oh, drop this game," said Alma. "Haricart you aren't fooling us a little bit. We know you for a blood-thirsty Sioux, who is making trouble every minute for decent people in this territory. All I want you to do is to keep your distance from us. My father is better off without you than with you."

"Perhaps you had better let your father decide as to whom he will associate with," rejoined Haricart.

"But to business. I merely called to say that I sent Tessier back to our camp. I apologize for his conduct and will pay the damage he has made."

"Never mind the damage," dryly said Hudson. "I will pay for the broken window. He can pay the Indian Medicine Man for charming the pain out of his bruised bones, when I flung him through the glass."

"In due time," slowly asserted Haricart, "Jean Tessier will pay you, Mr. Hudson."

"With a shot out of an ambush," sneered Hudson. "I know his breed. He couldn't fight me fair if he tried."

"I am not here to justify Tessier," replied Haricart. "I have told you that I think he was wrong in his attitude. Nor am I here to fight his battles with you, Mr. Arthur Hudson, as you call yourself. I am here only to make my personal peace with Miss Alma Hampton."

Alma disliked the turn the conversation was taking. She knew that the sole support of her old father and herself came from the gambling place, and the saloon they owned, the Bank Exchange.

Trouble with Haricart might lead to complications. So she made a quick decision to compromise.

"What is the use of quarreling," she said. "Let bye gones be bye gones. I am willing to call this a draw if you are. Hudson can take care of himself with Tessier although Arthur is a chump if he don't go and blow Tessier's head off quick."

"It is not my business to fight Tessier's battles," replied Haricart. "He can fight his own."

Haricart was delighted the way things were going. If he was not much mistaken there was a good chance for the deaths of both Tessier and Hudson, each of whom the wily Sioux felt had better be removed from his path.

"They are both making trouble for me," thought Haricart. "The quicker they are killed the easier I shall rest."

Haricart then turned to Alma.

"I thank you for smoking the pipe of peace with me," he said. "Is your father in the bar-room?"

"Oh, don't mention peace," replied Alma. "Peace and you don't gee or haw. But I'll bury the hatchet with you, because that's the best way out of it for us all. Father's in the bar-room all right. I suppose he is pretty well tanked up by this time. It's pretty near daylight. If father is sober when daylight comes all the mountains around us totter on their base."

A gleam of merriment crossed Haricart's face. He bowed. Then he swung open the doors that separated the gambling room from the bar.

The room was the typical frontier drinking place. A rough pine board or two lay on rough barrels. This made the bar. Behind it was a little row of shelves, with bottles of liquor, and the usual fittings of a cheaper class of bar-room.

"Old Bill" Hampton, a stout, gray haired man of sixty was tending to the wants of a dozen customers. He was in his shirt sleeves, and was at the jolly state of intoxication. But all the time he served his customers with an eye to the main chance, the cash.

"No booze unless you have the cash," "Old Bill" said to a young half-breed who had ordered a drink. "Two bits for one drink of the best whisky sold on the frontier."

The young brave produced a Canadian quarter which he laid on the wet counter.

Hampton swept it into his till and handed out a bottle of whiskey with practically the same motion.

The Indian filled a good sized glass clear to the brim, closing his fingers around the glass and filling clear up to his finger tips.

He swallowed the fiery stuff without winking and stalked out of the room.

"If I were you I would take care how I sold liquor so openly to Indians," put in Chief Haricart in a low tone.

"That's you, Chief," answered Hampton. "You are always saying, 'If I were you I wouldn't.'"

"I only spoke for your own good."

"Never mind my good. I'm out for the daisy dust; the coin, the gilt stuff, my Chieftain. I'll take a good many risks don't you know, to get it."

"Even by smuggling?" whispered Haricart.

"Sure as you're a foot high," replied "Old Bill." "Got anything good?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Fifty thousand dollars worth of furs."

"Nothing else?"

"Furs are getting hard to get over. The gang that handle our stuff on the American-Canadian border say it's getting harder to get over every year. The best way now is down to Montana, and in that way. Once over we can ship direct to New York and get the furs on the market there at a good price. People don't ask questions when they see a bargain in furs there, you know."

"What's got into the business?"

"It's those infernal American Scouts. They are in uniform and out of it, and in our game or out of it. Say, no one knows but what his best friend is a Scout. They got Carlos Ildefonso and his bunch last month, I hear. That gang was a big catch. They smuggled more Canadian whiskey over, and brought back more good American goods for us all up here, than any gang in the business. Whole gang was pinched by the

American Scouts. They are in jail in Seattle awaiting trial for smuggling."

"Look out that they don't get us yet," rejoined Haricart. "They are out for us I know all the time."

"For us! Not for me. I haven't broken any laws. You are a cute Sioux but you aren't cute enough to put anything up to me. Your word isn't worth much in court, and you are the only person that ever said 'smuggling' to yours truly, 'Old Bill.'"

"Never mind that kind of talk. Cut it out. We are both in too deep to split on each other. But here's one thing I want to know. Who is this Arthur Hudson?"

"Who is Hudson? Why, he's our faro dealer."

"Where did he come from?"

"Where did he—will you listen to the Sioux? How do I know. How many of us are living out here under our real names? Say, you make me sick."

"Where did you get him?"

"I didn't get him. He got me. Blew here one day on the Fort Rae coach. Was dead broke. Said he was a good faro dealer. My man jumped town ahead of the Sheriff just about that time. Left me without a dealer. Alma and I had to sit in and deal to keep the game alive. Had no faro dealer. So took on Hudson. Good man he is. Game goes fine now. We clean up good money out of the room. The Sheriff skipper was always letting the bankroll get away and into some crook's pocket. Think he kept most of the pelf himself."

"Isn't it dangerous taking on an unknown man here where there are so many secrets?" queried Haricart.

"Where could I get a known man to deal faro in a frontier town like Yellow Knife where there's not ten men who aren't 'wanted by the police' somewhere?"

Haricart nodded.

"Well I suppose you are right," he said, "but I want to know more about Hudson."

"Learn all you can," rejoined Hampton. "Your man Tessier learned a lot about him. You aren't too old to learn things, eh?"

Haricart considered. Was all this a plan to get at the bottom of the secrets of his gang? Was Hudson trying to get evidence against his band, which would end in the *round up of the Indian smugglers*? Or were his suspicions unfounded and was Hudson merely a stray broken down gambler, willing to ply his profession in the tiny town of Yellow Knife?

"It's a situation that must be watched," Haricart considered. "After all a careful shot will settle Hudson any time! As for Alma I can tame her up in my camp very quietly. And 'Old Bill' could take an unfortunate drink of whiskey that might kill him. Well, we will see. The game is on. Now shuffle the cards."

While Haricart and Hampton conferred there was equally as important a conference going on between Alma and Hudson.

"I have a plan," Alma announced as Hudson turned to her after Haricart had left them.

"Unfold it."

"We have got to get my father out of Haricart's power."

"How?"

"If I knew, how do you suppose I would be taking you into my confidence—don't be woozy?"

"It's a big contract you have laid out?"

"It's a big country you are in. Everything is big here—even to our contracts."

Hudson smiled. But he felt that he had been brought face to face with a dangerous situation.

"I would do anything I could to help you, Alma, and in this matter you may count on me. But how can I help you carry out this dangerous plan?"

"There is only one way," replied the girl. "Wait, watch and hustle while you wait. I'll watch at my end. You watch at yours. When you get anything that looks like helping us, spit it out to me. I'll do the same by you. By and bye we will put over something that will get the old man out of his tangle. See?"

"I'm with you, girl, all square," replied Hudson. "We will get this thing unwound between us. Now it's time for the game to begin. I'll go back and deal faro until sun-up. Perhaps something will be dropped about the table that will give us our lead."

Alma nodded.

"And I will go and pull the old man off to bed. I hear him singing. I'll tend bar till sun-up then will shut up and put José on duty till afternoon," she said.

Hudson hurried into the gambling room where Alma could hear him calling, "Make your game, gentlemen," in loud tones to attract a crowd from the bar-room.

"He's all to the billiards," Alma said. "I know a straight guy when I see him, if I am in a frontier town. I can trust Arthur Hudson. He is about the only man in Yellow Knife I can trust."

As Alma spoke a faint timid rap came to the door of the room in which she stood.

"Come in," she shouted.

No one entered. Instead the rapping continued.

"Great snakes!" Alma cried. "Why don't you come in you ninny. Here, I'll open the door for you, if you don't understand good American, 'come in.'"

Suiting the action to the word she swung open the door. It led to the main hall of the Bank Exchange, and Alma knew that who ever knocked, had come in the main door of the building because a draft of chill early morning air swept over her.

Alma saw tottering towards her a tiny figure. Its white face, and half closed eyes made her shudder.

"Good Lordy," said the girl. "What's this?"

The figure swayed into the room.

Alma caught it just as it fell swooning forward face downward.

"Good Lord!" the girl cried. "Why it's a boy. Where ever did he come from?"

The slight form in her arms gasped, shuddered and opened its eyes.

"Did he kill him?" the pale lips questioned as Alma bent low to hear.

grasped in his hand. "Steering four half broken bronchos through the Point Escatado canyon ain't no cinch."

"Especially when we have a full treasure box," replied Phelps. "It's a shame for the company to send out so much cash with only one guard. It's incitin' robbery. Times is too hard in the North-West to be so a temptin' ones fellow man."

"I suppose there ain't enough guards to go out two by two, eh?"

"Not at this time of the year. You see there's treasure goin' to Fort Resolution, and Fort Providence, up Great Slave Lake an' there's guards got to be on them coaches. There's enough of us guards to go round all the year but just this time, when the cash to pay for furs comes to the forts hereabouts from the Hudson's Bay Company agency at Fort Churchill. Why, there's a million and a half dollars goin' through this country right now on three coaches with one man to each coach a protectin' of it."

"It's sure takin' long chances," replied Maltby.

"It sure is."

The coach creaked and crawled along up hill, through the deep acrid dust. It blew about the four toiling horses in great smoke-like clouds.

The coach with its high lower body, its heavy wheels, its great brakes, and the high seat for the driver, with a seat on the roof where sat the guard made a dramatic picture.

The building of the railroad has pushed this type of locomotion far toward the Arctic circle.

"Keno" Phelps, so called because he always lost most of each month's pay at the fascinating gambling game of "Keno," bore a repeating rifle across his knees. Around his bulky waist was the usual 45-caliber Army revolver, a weapon used almost entirely in the North-West. When one of its leaden cargo landed in an enemy's anatomy, the enemy quit right there. Smaller caliber weapons could not stop the rush of any man, or beast larger than a Jack rabbit. So every one carried a big caliber revolver, which was most always spoken of as "a gun."

"It's bum this job," Phelps said. "I'm goin' to quit it soon. A fellow ain't really got no show against one of them 'Road Agents.' They always gits a guard out of the bushes. Then, when he's out the driver he gets it, if he ain't fly and holds up his hans' at de foist shot."

Crack.

A flash of light sprang from the bushes. Phelps threw up his hands, and with a soft moan fell over dead.

The shot had passed through the poor guard's heart. He "had quit the job" quicker than he had thought, and before the resolution had practically left his mind.

Bang!

The leading horse, a handsome pinto broncho, plunged wildly and lay still. The shot had gone through the animal's heart. The rest of the horses came to a plunging stop. They could go no further weighted down with their dead companion.

"Oh, hell, I'm held up," resignedly said "Pink" Maltby. He had driven in the North-West for forty years. A hold up was nothing unusual, and without awaiting the cry, "Hold Up Your Hands," held them up as a matter of course. One gets cynical after he has driven a stage coach forty years, and been held up by some bandit for an average of three times each year.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE POINT ESCATADO CANYON.

"It's darker than any Indian's mind."

"That's pretty dark."

"Pink" Maltby, driver of the Fort Rae coach thus spoke to "Keno" Phelps, guard of the half million dollar treasure box, that reposed in the boot of the great coach as it wound its way on its final stage of the long, long journey from Fort Churchill to Fort Rae.

"I hate this last stage of our trip," continued Maltby, as he felt out his leaders through the reins

In the first flush of the dawn, a strange figure stepped out of the bushes that lined Point Escatado canyon.

The man wore a mask. His coat, or trappers blouse was turned inside out.

In each hand two great revolvers loomed ominously.

"My hands are up," said Maltby in a bored tone of voice. "You needn't show anything more. You've got the drop on me. The guard is dead, I guess."

Neither Road Agent, or driver looked at the still white face, lying in a pool of blood which lay supine, and chill in death on the top of the coach, and which a few moments before had been "Keno" Phelps.

Human life in that great wild country, is extremely cheap.

"Get off that box," yelled the Road Agent.

With hands in the air Maltby stumbled down to the ground.

"Keep your hands up."

"Sure."

"Any passengers?"

"You bet," snapped a childish voice. A small figure darted from the coach.

The revolver in the Road Agent's right hand swung around until it covered the new figure. The weapon in the left hand still covered Maltby.

"Who are you?"

"Who me?" asked the childish voice.

"Yes, you. Don't get gay or I'll shoot you."

"Hully gee!" gasped the child. "Get on to his Miner theatreship. Act de foist. De Hold Up. Enter guy wid de gun: 'Give me de yellow boys' says he or I'll shoot.' My, aint dis great. Dis is de real thing. Dat's punk."

"Shut up," yelled the Road Agent. "What yor' name."

"George Augustus Willoughby Stubbs," gasped the now frightened boy.

"Where are you from?"

"Noo Yoik, cawn't ye see it from me clothing, old chappie," replied the youth whose fears passed away quickly. "And then there's me bloomin' manners, don't ye know."

"Where did you get him?" asked the masked figure of Maltby.

"At Fort Churchill. Came all the way up. Said he was goin' to the Klondike to make his fortune," replied the coach driver.

"He's a long way from the Klondike out here," snapped the masked figure. "Now you kid, have you got a gun?"

"Sure," replied the boy. "Don't think I'd be out here if I wasn't heeled."

"Don't either of you move," said the bandit. There was not much of a reason for the remark. Neither or boy wanted to move when he saw that unwinking round revolver barrel stuck up against his head.

The Road Agent with quick deftness took two revolvers from Maltby. In the boy's pocket he found an old fashioned single barreled pistol, made for the edification of every small boy of the East. Its leaden pellet would not have harmed a fly.

"Is that your gun?" roared the Road Agent with a great burst of laughter.

"Bet your life," snapped the boy, "that'll keep me for awhile. Say, this is de goods. Oh, if I only had a phone to Newspaper Row! 'Give me de City Editor' says I. 'Say pard, I goes on when I gets de main guy,

Big hold-up in de North-West. Big masked party shoots up de Fort Rae coach. Git's de treasure box. It's an exclusive story. Give me ten for it. Say, yer on."

The boy rambled on.

"Oh, let up," yelled the Road Agent, "I hate to shoot a kid but this is getting on my nerves."

Stubbs, or Stubbsey, as he preferred to be called, a New York city newsboy in search of adventure, and getting it good and plenty, turned pale, and stopped his chatter.

The Road Agent gave three sharp whistles.

Three truculent ruffians slouched out of the underbrush. Each bore a wicked looking rifle, with side arms, of two revolvers.

"Tie up the man," snapped the Road Agent to the new comers.

In a trice Maltby was pinioned.

"Two of you throw down the treasure box."

Two men climbed on the coach. In a moment the big steel box with half a million in money in it came tumbling to the ground.

"Get the horses," commanded the Road Agent.

Two bronchoes were quickly unhitched from the coach. The treasure box was swiftly loaded on a long tree between the two animals. Each horse bore one end, the box swaying in the middle.

"Get out of here quick," yelled the Road Agent to the three men, "It's getting light."

"Now you Maltby," continued the bandit, "and you kid, you just listen to me. Don't you give no description of me to any one askin,' or me and my gang will get you."

Maltby nodded. He well knew what it would mean if he dared disregard an order. A shot from the bushes any trip he made in the future would silence his tongue forever.

He rapidly explained to the boy that he had better keep a close mouth if he wanted to live long.

"I'm on," the kid whipped in, "don't you think I'm taking a chans't to die way out here. It's too far from little old Broadway, to cash in. I'll not quit de game out of me old town."

But when the boy looked up toward the roof of the coach and saw the body of Phelps, the guard; he turned sick and faint. His face went white. He faced the sudden death of the North-West for the first time.

"Say," he whispered. "Did he kill dat guard? Aw, ain't dat a shame. Perhaps he ain't hurt. Say, Phelpsey, you ain't dead is yer?"

No answer came from the still form.

"Gosh!" said poor whimpering Stubbs. "I'll bet dat big masked bloke did get him. Gosh!"

His cries were checked from further utterance by the Road Agent.

"You two fools stay here an hour," said the bandit. "Then I'll get a good start on you. I don't care what you do then. But don't you dare stir for an hour."

Maltby was too old a campaigner not to follow these directions. He waited until the sun was easily an hour high. Then he asked the boy to unbind him. The Road Agent had not bound Stubbs.

"You see that road there," remarked Maltby after he was free, and had rubbed his cramped limbs until their circulation was restored.

"Yes, sure as yer born," replied Stubbs.

"Well, you hit it quick. You go back to the town of Yellow Knife. It's only a short distance back of

us. We had hardly left it when we were held up. Tell 'Old Bill' Hampton, or his daughter Alma Hampton, that the Fort Rae coach has been held up, and the guard's shot and the treasure's gone. Tell him 'Pink' Maltby sent you to ask him to send help. I can't do nothin' with no horses."

The dead coach horse was all that was left. The bandit had ridden off one horse, two had been used to carry away the treasure, and the third was taken as a mount for the third bandit.

Maltby spoke truly. He was helpless.

Breaking into a fast run Stubbs hurried off down the dusty road for aid.

The poor lad, only fifteen years old, had supped on horrors that night. As he sped along he revolved the sights that he had witnessed in his mind.

When he thought of "Keno" Phelps his bravery vanished. Phelps had been very kind to the boy during the journey. They had talked often together. The guard had shared his meals with the boy, for the lad was almost penniless. He had worked his way West from New York, just for the fun of the life, and was such an atom on life's seat that the guard had felt sorry for him.

"I hope Phelps is'n't dead," sobbed the boy as he sped onward. "Anyway if he ain't it's up to me to get a doctor."

Trotting onward Stubbs saw the lights of the Bank Exchange. He did not know that this was the place he had been directed to seek. But he blindly bolted into the hall of the bleak, barren frame structure, and knocked at the first door he saw.

Then he fell forward into Alma Hampton's pitying arms, when she opened the door.

"You poor kid," Alma said as she kissed the white dirty face, "What is the matter?"

Stubbs sat up quickly.

"Road Agents," he whispered.

"Road Agents," stammered Alma in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Dey got de Fort Rae coach, up de road a bit," desperately continued the boy. "Dey shot de guard. I guess dat's wot made me faint. He was good to me, he wos. Dey killed one-o-de horses, and skipped wid de others, with de steel box we had on de coach all de way up from Fort Churchill."

Alma guessed the entire situation.

"Did they hold you up in Point Escatado canyon," she asked hurriedly.

"Don't know de name. Was a piece up de road," answered Stubbs.

"Did any one send you?"

"Fellow said tell Miss Alma Hampton, or 'Old Bill' Hampton dat he was needin' help."

"What was his name?"

"'Pink' Maltby," replied Stubbs.

Alma needed no more explanation.

She dashed to the bar-room.

"Father," she cried, "the Fort Rae coach has been held up in Escatado canyon. Road Agents got the treasure box. 'Keno' Phelps has been shot, and 'Pink' Maltby, the driver has sent back for help."

The bar-room loungers rushed to Alma as she spoke, Arthur Hudson who had heard the words came running in from the gambling room, followed by all the frequenters of the place.

Prominent among them was Chief Haricart.

"A hold up," he shouted. "Boys let's make a posse and hurry to the scene."

The crowd yelled in approbation.

"Come on then," cried Haricart as he rushed ahead taking entire direction of the pursuit and the command on himself.

So streamed down the road the posse. No one missed Alma and Hudson, but like two flashes in the flush of the morning light, the party were passed in the first five hundred yards by Alma, who mounted on a great rangy Broncho tore along at top speed, bearing Stubbs in front of her, while behind on a big bay cantered Hudson, each armed to the teeth.

"We must get to the scene of the hold up first," said Alma as she urged her horse forward at his greatest speed. "When that gang gets there there won't be a track left in ten seconds. They'll trample out any clue we might find with their awkward feet."

"Don't talk, save your breath," replied Hudson.

"Give that beast of yours both whip and spur."

The two, man and woman, whirled fast toward the silent body on the top of the Fort Rae coach, and the living man awaiting them calmly.

CHAPTER V.

THE STRANGE CLUE.

"What's the matter 'Pink?'" asked Alma as she threw herself from her horse, almost before the animal was out of his swift stride. "A hold up?"

"Pink" Maltby nodded quietly. He sat on the ground beside his horseless coach. There was not much use for words. He had been held up so often in his years of service that he had not much imagination left. Nothing in the wild trouble had appealed to him, except that it was annoying to be behind time with his coach. He was not responsible for the lost half million.

That had been "Keno" Phelps' duty. And Phelps had died without a chance to defend his treasure, by an assassin bullet. "Well," thought Maltby, "he took that chance when he took that job."

So Maltby didn't feel called upon to be very enthusiastic about anything when Alma and Hudson arrived.

"Did they get Phelps?" queried Alma.

"Yes. Got him at the first fire. He was up on top when they hit him. I put him inside. Better get some cattle and drive back to Yellow Knife. I can't lose much time. Got the mail aboard."

"What time were you held up?" asked Hudson.

"Just at day break."

"Did you see the man that held you up?"

"Sure."

"Can you describe him?"

"No. He was masked, couldn't get a line on what he looked like."

Maltby and Stubbs exchanged glances. It was not lost on Hudson but he decided to ask no more questions just then.

"It's a pretty serious matter, this hold up," said Hudson to Alma as he drew her aside. "You see the treasure box must be filled at this time of the year. Then you know the shooting and killing of the guard was rank murder. It stopped the Canadian mails, a grave offense. It must be a very desperate thug to

run all those chances. The Canadian government has long arms."

"You are right," replied the girl. "And do you know that I think some how or other that Haricart and his band are in this thing."

"I've had the same impression but it's only an impression. Haricart was gambling at my arm when this hold up took place. He could not be in it."

"I know. My idea seems foolish. But you know a woman's intuition. But let us search the ground quickly."

Both went to work with a will. They traced a confused mass of steps going hither and thither.

Hudson called across to Maltby.

"There were four of the gang, weren't there?"

"Yes," replied the driver.

"How did you know that?" asked Alma in astonishment.

"The tracks told me that," replied Arthur.

"You'd make a fine woodman."

"That's not hard. The tracks were easy to be read."

"What else did they tell you?"

"The gang after getting back the treasure slung the box on a tree between two of the coach horses?"

"What?"

"Yes. Look here. Here is the heavy track of the steel box. The men dragged it from the coach here."

Alma saw that Hudson was right.

"Now," continued Hudson, "over here you see these tracks. Two horses were placed here. You see by their marks that they stood with their heads pointed toward Fort Rae?"

"Distinctly. I can see the shoe marks made by each horse very plain."

"Now you notice between each horse the mark of the heavy steel box?"

"Yes."

"The horses you see were standing light. The tracks show that. Now you look right here. See how heavy the shoes of the horses have dented the dry earth further along?"

"Surely."

"That shows that when they started they were loaded. Further it is proved to be so when you notice that while where the horses stood first there is to be seen plainly the mark of the steel treasure box, yet further along there is no treasure box mark. But there are the shoe marks traveling slowly along. Am I not right?"

"You are a wonder," whispered Alma.

"Thus I figure," Hudson continued, "that the two horses bore the burden of the treasure box, no easy one by the way, for that box taxed the strength of both horses. Neither could have carried it alone. The Road Agents had no vehicle, or we would have seen their tracks. Hence it is easy to figure that they placed two of the coach horses abreast, slung the treasure box on a pole between them, and then started away in the direction of Fort Rae."

"I see."

"And further my theory is strengthened by the fact that if you look fifty feet up the road toward Fort Rae you will see that a small tree has been cut off at the roots, or rather a few feet above it. It's a fresh cut you see."

"I see it all now."

"That is where the Road Agents got their tree

which they used as the brace on which to sling their treasure box. They fastened one end to each horse, and then proceeded down the road."

"It's just wonderful. I see the entire matter now."

"There's one thing more to consider," added Hudson.

"What is it? You've got me all in the air now," replied Alma.

"The party of Road Agents three in number were Indians, and they came from Yellow Knife—no I am not so sure that all three were Indians—two were, anyway."

"How can you possibly know that?"

"By the many moccasin prints about us."

"Then you think the Road Agents were Indians?"

"No, not all. Some were. The last I can't make out. He did not wear boots. But I can't see what he did wear."

Hudson traced the story here and there, by carefully stepping quickly among the tangled tracks left in the soft earth, with a topping of dry dirt several inches thick, through which could be seen the tracks of the Road Agents as if engraved in solid rock.

"We had better follow the tracks up the road," Hudson finally said.

Accordingly he and Alma were soon far up the road, and finally at a long turn, were out of sight of the coach, leaving Stubbs and Maltby to await their return, and to greet the oncoming posse whose shouts could be plainly heard.

The road after the turn dipped quickly out of the Point Escatado canyon, and then ran along the shores of Great Slave Lake.

"I thought so," remarked Hudson. "See there are the three horses, which I am willing to wager my entire cash on, belong to the coach."

Alma saw the three animals quietly grazing from the bunch grass that grew along the side of the road.

"I will bet you all I've got further," added Hudson, "that we find the print of a canoe at the shelving bank over there on the lake shore."

The man and girl ran rapidly to the spot.

Hudson was right.

There in the soft gravelly lake shore was the clear sharp marks of a canoe.

"See," said Hudson, "this is the way the party went. They escaped by the lake. Look! There is the sharp mark again of the treasure box. Look further. See the traces of the horses' hoofs, of the moccasin prints—and by Jove—"

Hudson darted forward.

There on the shore of the lake lay a moccasin. It was gaily trimmed with many parti-colored beads. It was of soft deer skin. It was in size one worn by a man, and Hudson turned it over and over with a thoughtful face.

"What a great discovery," cried Alma in joy, "Now we will know who the Road Agent is."

"I am not sure of this fact yet. That moccasin rather stumps me."

"It surely belonged to the Road Agent, or one of his gang."

"It belonged to the Road Agent himself," replied Hudson. "We know that most the men with him were Indians. That is clear from their moccasin prints. But this man is not an Indian."

"What man?"

"The man who wore this moccasin I have in my hand."

"Why?"

"Because if the man was an Indian he would wear an Indian made moccasin."

"This then is not an Indian made foot-covering?"

"It is not. I will show you why. First you see it is not roughly sewed. Exactly alike are all the different parts of the moccasin. This shows that they were made by a machine. Thus we can see that the man who owned this nicely decorated foot wear is no savage."

"As you put it, I see clearly."

"If it had been a Sioux, or a Cree, or a Blackfoot Indian, the tribes we most naturally meet in this territory, we would be pretty sure to get to the owner of this moccasin pretty quickly. The Indians are after all, mere savages and white methods get most of their secrets quickly."

"Then you don't think the finding of the moccasin important?"

"Oh yes I do, very important. It is a most valuable clew. I dare say now that it will go a long ways to getting to the bottom of the identity of the Road Agent. But it would be an easier job, much clearer, if we had only the Indians to deal with."

"You are convinced that no Indian wore that moccasin?"

"Perfectly."

"Why?"

"Now you know, Alma, a white man toes out a little. He is taught that way of walking when he is a child, toddling at his mother's knee."

"Yes."

"A white child's mother finds her off-spring toeing straight ahead. This is the natural gait for all children white or red. But she doesn't want her white child to walk 'like an Indian' so she teaches the youngster to toe out."

"That is true. I well remember my dear dead mother, saying to me, 'toe out, Alma.'"

"Just fit that moccasin over your foot. So."

Alma did as requested.

"See?" triumphantly pointed out Hudson. "The moccasin toes out. The man who wore it was white; not an Indian."

Alma was convinced.

"And unfortunately there are any number of white men that moccasin will fit. I can think of a half dozen right around our place."

"What is your next plan?" asked Alma mightily impressed with the woodcraft of Hudson. "You seem to be able to gather a wonderful amount of facts from that moccasin."

"In a case like this everything points somewhere. Now I may be wrong as to my views of this moccasin, but I feel that I am not very wrong. If I mistake not this moccasin is to be a vital clue in our quest. If we are careful through it we may reach our heart's desire."

"Will you tell the posse of our find?"

"Not as you value your life. This must be our own secret for the present. I don't think I am over stepping the mark when I tell you that I have an idea that the Road Agent is this moment in Yellow Knife—but we had better get back quickly to the coach, before the posse arrives."

The way back to the coach was quickly retraced.

Stubbs, the boy, and Maltby sat patiently awaiting them.

"Anythin' doin'," asked the boy.

"Nothing—except to have you close your face. In an Indian country learn to be as foxy as any Indian."

"Say, you," rejoined the boy, "I might change dat to read, 'foxy as an Indian on Broadway, in Noo Yoik.'"

"Are there any Indians on Broadway?"

"Lady you bet dere is—you're safer out here wid de real Nort'-West Indian than you is on B'way, wid de kind dey has dere."

Having delivered him of this pregnant sentence Stubbs sat him down and smiled.

The posse came hurtling along as the boy finished.

In the lead was Chief Haricart. By his side ran Jean Tessier.

"Look out, Arthur," said Alma in an undertone.

"Here comes Tessier. Get your gun where you can make a happy jump for it."

Hudson hitched his revolver belt forward until his weapon lay directly beneath his hand.

Chief Haricart saw the motion. He raised his hand. The posse which was evidently taking orders from him halted.

"Drop that gun, Hudson," yelled Haricart. "Tessier quit fooling with your weapon. This feud is off for today. We have before us a hard task. The Fort Rae coach has been held up. A friend to many of us has been shot. A large amount of money is missing. We are not private individuals now, but we are a posse trying to catch the murderers, and robbers. Hudson and Tessier must drop their private feud until we are no longer a posse. Then they can shoot each other up and be damned."

"That's right," cried Pierre Huissier, the "Leaping Panther." "The Chief is right. Private grudges mustn't be shot out this trip."

Hudson laughed.

"I am not looking for trouble," he said, "if Tessier wants to suspend hostilities all right. I'm willing to agree not to shoot him on sight, if he agrees not to pot me. But he must stay ahead of me. I'll risk no shot in the back or a quiet little stab with a Bowie knife from him. I know him."

Tessier turned red and then white with anger.

"I am no assassin," he muttered.

"I am not sure about that," replied Hudson. "You have taken the bushwhacker's shot many a time, my lad, or I mistake you greatly."

"Enough of this," thundered Haricart. "Hudson you're wrong. I'll warrant that Jean Tessier is too brave a man to lay out in the bushes and shoot his enemy from ambush."

"When I said that Tessier was a bushwhacker I meant that he did just that kind of a trick if he thought he could get away with it. And he would bushwhack me tonight if he thought he would not be detected," added Hudson.

Tessier gave Hudson a malignant glance.

"Words, all idle words," sneered Haricart. "But there'll be no shooting until this posse is disbanded for if there is I'll preside as Judge Lynch and hang the man who survives."

"We will help you pull the rope," cried the crowd, and Hudson saw that he had gained his point, and had so clearly thrown the light upon Tessier, that during

the continuance of the search he would not dare to harm him.

"Spread out in the fashion of a big fan, and let us cover all the ground in search of the Road Agents," cried Haricart. He and Tessier ran hither and thither as if hot on a trail. Their united foot-prints soon obliterated any of the marks that had so enlightened Alma and Hudson.

A shout soon informed the party that the missing horses to the coach had been found. They were quickly hitched to the coach and the party returned sadly to Yellow Knife.

The body of Phelps was turned over to the coach-station agent, and "Pink" Maltby, with an extra horse to replace the one that was killed by the Road Agent soon was bowling along to Fort Rae, to report the hold up, and the fact that not only was the half million treasure missing, but the guard over it was dead.

Haricart had fixed upon a scheme that he now began to put into execution.

"Come on boys," he shouted to the posse. "We will go get a drink on me and talk this thing over."

"I don't like the looks of that," whispered Alma to Hudson. Haricart is trying to make some trouble. He never bought a drink for a crowd in his life before. He will hardly buy a drink for himself."

"Don't be suspicious," laughed Hudson.

"You have need to be when you are dealing with Haricart," replied Alma, "he is up to some devilishness."

They could hear the hum of many voices in the bar-room. "Old Bill" was hard put to it to serve the thirsty crowd.

While the crowd were busy Haricart drew Pierre Huissier aside.

"What do you think of that hold up?" he asked.

"I can't say as I think anythin' about it," replied Huissier, who never was noted for his thinking powers.

"I have something I want to show you," whispered Haricart.

"Well, show it."

Haricart handed Huissier a pocket-handkerchief.

"Wot's this?" asked Huissier.

"Examine it," requested Haricart.

"It's just a handkerchief—with hello what's this. Here is the letter 'H' in one corner."

"Whose name does that 'H' stand for?"

"How do I know?"

"Does it not stand for Hudson?"

"It certainly does."

"You know that Hudson is that faro dealer here?"

"Sure."

"That's certainly his handkerchief, isn't it?"

"Looks that way."

"Well I found that handkerchief not fifty feet from where we located the coach horses where the Road Agents had turned them loose."

"What! Hudson is a Road Agent, eh? Well, I never liked the sneaking cuss."

In a few moments the entire crowd knew of the charge made by Haricart which he backed by the apparent evidence of the handkerchief.

In a half drunken crowd suspicion flies fast.

Quickly every man in the crowd was dead sure that the man who held up the Fort Rae coach was Hudson.

"Let's lynch him," whispered Tessier who had been active in condemning Hudson in the crowd and had

been quietly inflaming the men so that all suspicions were pointing toward Hudson.

The idea was taken up like wild-fire.

"Lynch him! The Dirty Road Agent! Lynch Hudson," yelled the crowd.

"There he is, in the faro room," cried Tessier.

Like the angry waves of the sea, the crowd, with weapons bristling, made a dash for the faro room.

They swarmed into the room.

Then they shrank back.

With a cocked-revolver in her hand, Alma Hampton greeted them. She stood gracefully with her little heels close together. Her white hand held an enormous revolver. Her blue eyes were snapping with anger.

"The first man that moves toward me dies," she hissed.

The leaders of the mob slid back upon the next in line.

They knew Alma Hampton would shoot if a movement was made.

"Stand back," the girl shouted, "There isn't a straight man in this pack of hell hounds. I heard what you were saying out there in the bar-room and there'll be no lynching here, unless you kill me, and I'll get some of you merry lads first."

The crowd cowered in fear.

CHAPTER VI.

ARTHUR HUDSON'S PERIL.

"But Miss Alma," said Haricart from a safe place near the rear of the crowd, "you ought to listen before you shoot."

"Listen to what—more lies?" snapped Alma. Her hand still held the revolver ready for instant action. Her eyes did not quail.

"No, not lies, Miss Alma," purred Haricart in his sweetest voice. "You don't understand."

"Oh, I understand, you all right," replied Alma. "This is a cook up of your Indian brain. You've had it in for Hudson for quite a spell. You are trying to get even."

Haricart's face grew white with apprehension. He had not thought Alma would have come to the rescue of Hudson. He knew her popularity with the men of Yellow Knife, and feared he had overshot the mark, and had made more trouble for himself than for Hudson, by his charges. But he knew that he must make an attempt to justify himself.

"You misjudge me, Miss Alma," he said. "We found a handkerchief dropped by the Road Agent right near the place where the coach was stopped."

"What of it," replied Alma. "What's that got to do with Hudson?"

"The handkerchief had an 'H' on it in one corner," remarked Huissier who stood in the van of the lynching party.

"That means 'Hudson'" continued Haricart. He smiled like the wily Sioux he was.

Alma saw it all in a moment. Hudson had inadvertently dropped his handkerchief near the scene of the hold up, or what was more likely Haricart had stolen one from Hudson, to "job him" with. She knew the fickle nature of a Yellow Knife mob, and feared that she could not hold it until she had turned its wrath.

"Can you not do better than that, Haricart," Alma sneered quick as a flash, "I am ashamed of you. That game isn't put up good at all. Why, Stubbsey here, this boy by my side can give you cards and spades, and do you out of any game like that."

"Explain, Miss Alma, we fellows ain't on," implored Huissier.

Alma lowered her weapon. She had the attention of the mob she saw, and they would patiently hear her. It was now her task to influence them away from Hudson and the idea of lynching him.

"Now boys," Alma continued, "let's talk this over. We don't want to make any mistakes. When Judge Lynch's verdict is in there's a corpse to account for. You don't want to lynch an innocent man."

"No! No!" yelled the mob.

"Now then," added the girl, "What time did this hold up take place?"

"Pink' Maltby said it was just about daylight this morning," replied Huissier for the mob.

"Exactly," answered Alma. "Now where were you this morning at about daybreak?"

Huissier scratched his head. Thought was an effort.

"Why I was playin' faro here," he said with his mouth agape.

"Where was Arthur Hudson then?" asked the girl.

"Why shucks—say boys we are dead wrong on this," replied Huissier, with a great laugh. "Say, Hudson was a dealing faro here right then. I remember he was, now I come to think of it."

"But how about this handkerchief?"

Chief Haricart held up the article with a suggestive twist of his elbow.

"Bosh," replied Alma, "You probably stole it off Hudson to try and play some such dirty trick on him, like this. Any way, wasn't Hudson and I at the hold up ahead of any of you boys. Didn't we rush by you on our horses as you took the road?"

"That's right boys, I see her," said Huissier.

"It might be that Hudson dropped the handkerchief near the scene of the hold up," added Alma,—"but what of it? What has the handkerchief got to do with anything, when a first class living witness like Pierre Huissier here, remembers that at the time of the hold up Arthur Hudson was here dealing faro. That alone clears Hudson."

The crowd debated among itself for several minutes. Huissier was active in the talk.

Haricart and Tessier saw that the trend of opinion had shifted to Hudson's innocence, and the two men hurried away quietly to escape sudden desire on the part of the mob for bringing unproven charges against Hudson.

"Was that Hudson's handkerchief?" asked Tessier as he and Haricart hurried toward the lake shore.

"Yes."

"Did you find it near the scene of the hold up?"

"No. I took it out of Hudson's packet when he was busy dealing the cards last night. I didn't know when I was going to get a chance to use it, but I played it in, as soon as I got the chance."

"It didn't play in hard, this trip."

"No, but any way, we have got to take action now. I guess we will have to play it right down to cases. We will have to abduct Alma, after all. The game is nearly over for us here."

"Why?"

"I got a letter on that Fort Rae coach."

"What did it say?"

"It said that the smuggling game is pretty near up for us, from this point. They are getting wise along the frontier as to our gang here on Great Slave Lake."

"What are you going to do, break up the gang?"

"Certainly not. I will just move to some other locality. I've a notion to cross the territory till we get to the Bad Lands. Then we can ship our stuff around by Fort Churchill, and drop the Montana and South Dakota way we have been shipping lately."

"That's a good idea."

"We won't have any use for 'Old Bill' if we shift quarters, so we might as well clean him out of his cash by giving his daughter a run for awhile up in our present camp."

"I see."

"Then we can get the old man's bank-roll, switch out of here, return the girl to him, get off to the Bad Lands, and let it go at that."

"How about Hudson?"

"Just as soon as we get the girl you kill him."

"He's too quick on the trigger for a straight fight for me."

"Oh, pot him out of the underbrush. I don't care how you get him. Kill him quick, for if we carry off the girl, and he's on earth he will break through a steel safe but that he'll get her back. He's sweet on her I think."

"When are we to steal the girl?"

"Tonight is as good a time as any. We haven't any use for 'Old Bill' any more. Let's get his cash and run as quick as we can."

"Shall I get the girl?"

"If you want to you may."

"I'd better break into her room."

"Can't do that."

"Why?"

"The Bank Exchange is never closed. There's always some one about. Too dangerous."

"Then how can I do it?"

"I'll write her a decoy letter, and will send it to her by a messenger she doesn't know."

"Will she fall for it?"

"Yes."

"That's about all then. You tell me where to get her."

"You be on the brink of the lake near where we hunted for the Road Agent at about ten o'clock tonight. Bring three of our men with you. Bring only Indians. I don't want any white but you in this. Have a canoe ready to carry Alma to our camp. She'll be there at the time I mention. I'll fix that much. But be careful. She's full of fight and can shoot like her side-partner Hudson."

"Never fear, I'll get the little she wildcat all right."

The two conspirators then separated.

Meanwhile Alma Hampton was busily engaged in stilling the clamor of the lynching party.

She earnestly prayed that Hudson would not return. Just before the gang had begun to suspect him he had, at Alma's request, gone to the post-office down the street, to see if the Fort Rae coach had brought any letters for the Bank Exchange.

The Fort Rae coach only ran to Yellow Knife once a month. Its monthly arrival meant a great deal to every one with friends "in the States" as such were always called.

"Now you boys," said Alma, "it's time to call this matter a drawn game. We know that Hudson didn't take any part in this hold up, now don't we."

"Sure," remarked Hussier.

"There's no reason for you to go any further in the matter, now is there?"

The crowd answered in the affirmative.

Alma pointed out that Tessier and Haricart each had reasons of a private nature for making up charges.

"Tessier will never forget or forgive Hudson's throwing his dirty self through our window, you know," pointed out Alma. "And Haricart certainly backs up everything that Tessier does. I guess you boys are next all right. I need not say more."

The gang of men soon saw the force of Alma's argument. Their hatred against Hudson, quickly turned to fury against the arch plotters, Haricart and Tessier.

"Where are the scoundrels," yelled Hussier. "They are the fellows we had better lynch. We will teach them to bring charges against decent men, like Hudson."

Fickle as a child the crowd started to find Haricart and Tessier. But they only discovered a vast vacancy where the two worthy scoundrels had been.

"They have made a sneak," yelled Hussier. "Out into the open after them. We will get them at last."

The lynchers streamed lustily out of the place bound to have a lynching.

Hudson soon returned from the post-office, if the little corner in the stage-coach station could be dignified by that name, where the scant mail for Yellow Knife was deposited once a month.

Few people in Yellow Knife received any letters. They had personal reasons for not communicating with the outer world.

Hudson's face was a picture when he heard of the news Alma had to tell him.

"Did you hold off that gang, alone?" he asked.

"Sure."

"You are a brave little girl."

"Fudge. You would have done the same thing for me."

"Of course I would. But then I'm a man and expected to do such things."

"Well, I'm a frontier girl that sticks by her friends even if she has to draw her gun now and then to do it."

"You are the goods, Alma."

"Bosh. Stop this blarney. There's one thing you have got to do."

"What is it?"

"Skip from these diggings."

"Nonsense."

"Yes you have."

"Why?"

"You are no use here."

"What do you mean?"

"Here you just wait to let that gang pot you. They'll get you yet, some day."

"I begin to see daylight."

"Now my plan is for you to give it out that you are going to pull out. Say you're going to Fort Rae, or any old place. Then when it's all about Yellow Knife that you are leaving, you start."

"Exactly."

"But you don't start really, you know."

"Oh, I don't. What do I do?"

"You get your horse. You get your blankets. You

put your grub on a pack-horse, and you start for Fort Rae."

"Yes."

"Now you put enough grub on the horse to last a month if necessary."

"Exactly."

"Then you pull out for Fort Rae. That's two days and nights easy journey."

"Yes."

"No one knows that you've got more grub aboard than will last you to Fort Rae."

"Well."

"Then about four miles out, you jump the Fort Rae trail, take to the mountains. Then you go into camp, and you come back in the night, and you watch this house. You watch and you listen, like an Indian on his first war path."

"Yes."

"I reckon you will hear lots and much of what you hear will show up Haricart and his gang."

"You mean that just now I am more value as a scout outside than here as your companion and your father's employee."

"I mean just this—you are marked for death here. This is a game of marked cards. Haricart nearly got you just now with a faked up pocket-handkerchief deal. It didn't work. But the next plant may."

"Precisely."

"For some reason or other Haricart and Tessier are afraid to get you straight. They don't dare to fight you man to man. They tried to job you by killing you for a crooked faro dealer. Then they put up the handkerchief deal. They won't put up but one deal next."

"What is that?"

"They will assassinate you."

"Not if I can help it."

"But you can't."

Hudson turned over Alma's plan in his mind. He looked at it from every possible point. It really was the only plan that could be taken up he soon saw.

"Shall we see each other while I am out in the underbrush?" asked Hudson.

"Just as little as possible."

"Why?"

"Haricart's gang will be spying on us all the time."

"But we can communicate with each other?"

"Yes."

Hudson finally made up his mind that Alma was right. He saw that he would be of more use as an outside scout than in the Bank Exchange, even if "Old Bill's" faro game thus lost a popular dealer.

It was immediately generally told all over Yellow Knife that Hudson was going to Fort Rae to live. There was much feeling of sorrow over his departure for Hudson had become very popular in the tough little town.

Haricart and Tessier had carefully kept away from the Bank Exchange for reason of fear at exactly what would happen to them if they appeared. They thought time had better assuage the anger of the lynching party before appearing in their usual haunts, although the lynchers had dispersed after their unsuccessful search for the two men, with much of their anger gone.

"Oh, Oh!" said Haricart to Tessier, "our Faro King flees from us, eh?"

"Yes, — him," replied Tessier, "now how I am going to get him you tell."

"It's a poser," replied Haricart. "But I guess I will see a way."

"How?"

"Hudson will go straight to Fort Rae, along the Fort Rae road, of course."

"I think so."

"Oh, he will. I hear he is packing up, and has his riding horse, and his pack horse all ready for the start. He will lead the pack-horse, and on it will carry his blankets and provisions. He will surely take the straight Fort Rae Road."

"Looks that way."

"My plan is easy. We can not be mixed up in this, Hudson is in too solid here in Yellow Knife for us to get into a fight and kill him that way."

"Besides he is such a splendid shot that he would get us before we could get him."

"Exactly."

"So what is your plan?"

"It's very simple. I shall send for Howling Wolf, our Indian guide at the camp."

"Yes."

"He will be instructed to go ahead tonight and in some quiet spot on the Fort Rae road, build a trap for Hudson."

"How?"

"It's done this way; a double-barreled shot-gun, loaded in each barrel with a half dozen bullets, and an extra load of powder, is secreted in the bushes at a solitary spot."

"Well?"

"The shot-gun is trained about at the waist of a man riding by on a horse."

"Oh."

"Then the gun is cocked, and capped. It's a regular arsenal, for the many bullets it contains gives it a wide sweep. No one can live through the scattering, deadly rain it will distribute when it goes off."

"Of course not."

"From the trigger of the gun runs an almost invisible wire to a bush that seems to hang over the road, just about breast high to the rider who comes flying along at top speed or who comes slowly leading a pack horse as Hudson will."

"Precisely."

"The rider sees the bush. His first natural movement is to brush it aside. The motion explodes the gun, and the rider falls dead riddled with bullets. One enemy the less, for us, eh?"

"But how about us?"

"Oh, we are seen about the town of Yellow Knife, even we may go into the Bank Exchange, and we can not have been here in Yellow Knife, both of us, seen by many people, and out there where Hudson lies dead at the same time?"

Tessier cogitated. He was slow brained, witless, a bundle of contradictions. Educated in Montreal, of a good French Canadian family, he, one moment talked like an educated man; the next like a simple thug. His thoughts seemed to move the same way; one moment a simple rough uncouth bully appeared to be thinking over a problem; the next it was analyzed with surprising vigor.

"That's all well for us," said Tessier at length, "but you will leave the shot-gun to be accounted for. If we use one of ours it may be traced back to the camp?"

"Admirably! You put your finger on the only weak

spot in our plans," replied Haricart. "But even that has been provided for."

"How?"

"Some six weeks ago 'Old Bill' Hampton's favorite shot-gun stood in an angle behind his bar."

"It always stood there I remember when 'Old Bill' wasn't out hunting with it."

"Just so. Well as there was no one around just when I saw the gun, I annexed it."

"You pinched it?"

"No I annexed it. Pinching is such a go-to-jail word. I prefer the word 'annexed.'"

"All right, 'annexed' or 'pinched' it's all the same to me. Take your choice. The shot-gun you have, anyway."

"Yes, I have it safe at the camp. I didn't know just what use I could put it to anyway, when I annexed it, but we know now. I shall have it fixed up for Hudson's kind reception when he starts for Fort Rae."

"It seems to me that Hudson will never reach Fort Rae."

"It begins to look that way."

"And when the shot-gun is found it will be pretty good proof to Yellow Knife that 'Old Bill' owner of the gun, planted it to trap Hudson."

"Because Hudson has been so attentive to Alma, 'Old Bill's' fair daughter."

"Yes."

"And with Hudson dead, 'Old Bill' lynched, or in jail charged with murdering Hudson, we will have Alma safe up at the camp, and we will pull two strings on 'Old Bill' if he is alive by that time."

"As how?"

"I will go to him in jail, tell him I can rescue his daughter, have our gang break in jail and rescue him, put the two of them over into America by the smuggler's underground route, for One Hundred Thousand Dollars."

"Has he got that much?"

"If he hasn't he must get it."

"Suppose he doesn't?"

"I will pinch a clergyman from somewhere, although they are scarce in this country and marry you and Alma."

"What's the use of all that trouble, Indian marriage is good enough for me."

"Yes, but not for me. If she escapes us any time, she'll be married to you all right, and if anything happens to her any time, you'd be legal heir to a portion of her estate."

"What is that worth?"

"I don't know. 'Old Bill' is thrifty. I should say he had a million of money locked up in the States where he can get it when he wants it. He told me once that when he got two million cash he was going to reform, quit the territory, take Alma to the States and settle down and be a good church member."

Even stolid Tessier was fired by the picture that Haricart had drawn.

"Hudson dead," he thought, "I have his sweetheart for my wife. After the honey-moon I'll drop her in the lake some night, making her death appear to be accidental. Then we will trick 'Old Bill,' and get the hundred thousand first, lay claim to Alma's estate net, seeing that 'Old Bill' gets 'underground' for good, when he starts for his beloved States—say, this Haricart is certainly the nifty plotter."

Haricart watched Tessier with furtive eyes.

"Is it a good plan?" he asked in soft, snakey hissing tone.

"The best ever. You hurry up and get the gun ready, put Howling Wolf at work. We will get rid of that gay boy Hudson, first, within the next few hours. The rest of the plot is to come late."

Tessier then asked what was best to do as to abducting Alma.

"I have a plan as you know. You be at the tryst at the lake side. I will see that she is there. Never fear."

Both men laughed heartily, as they thought of the coming night's work.

"With Hudson dead on the Fort Rae road, Alma in our camp, 'Old Bill' under suspicion of murder, I guess we are King of Yellow Knife, all right, eh?" smiled Tessier.

"On to the dance," said Haricart. "We must pull over this scheme tonight."

CHAPTER VII.

ALMA HAMPTON IN PERIL.

"Good bye, Mr. Hudson! Write us when you get to Fort Rae."

In the full blaze of the afternoon sun, Alma said good bye to Arthur Hudson. "Old Bill" half sober waved his good wishes by her side.

Haricart and Tessier from the "Trust and Deposit" saloon, the only real rival to the "Bank Exchange" in Yellow Knife saw Hudson depart.

Haricart and Tessier intent in proving an alibi, had started on one grand spree, so that as its throes progressed all Yellow Knife would witness their presence in the village, and would be willing to swear an alibi for them.

Tessier and Haricart on a spree were about the wildest pair that ever swept down on Yellow Knife.

The "Trust and Deposit" bar-tenders wondering at their guests, who had so long been identified with the "Bank Exchange" crowd, were not loathe to accept the money of the two roisterers. It came a flow of gold over the bar, and the noise the two men made could be heard a block.

"Come on," yelled Tessier as he danced out in the open street, "I'll buy booze for every man in Yellow Knife."

As he yelled there came around the corner a slouching figure of a half grown lad. It was "Dutch Fritz," a poor harmless boy, who had drifted into Yellow Knife from the States a week before, and being such an obvious tenderfoot, as new comers from the States were known in the territory, he had been the butt of many rough jokes.

"Dutch" Fritz wore a queer jacket, made in Germany, and uncouth and strange to the eyes of Yellow Knife, but quite the fashionable thing in far off Germany.

The coat was decorated with four big pearl buttons on the sleeve.

These caught drunken Tessier's eye.

"Ho! Ho! he yelled, "watch me shoot off the buttons."

Tessier drew his revolver. "Dutch" Fritz stood paralyzed by fear.

"Crash!" boomed the revolver.

Away spun a button.

"Bang!" cried the weapon.

A howl of pain escaped Fritz.

Tessier's second shot was a poor one. It had missed the button and buried itself in poor "Dutch" Fritz's wrist.

The wound was extremely painful and Fritz moaned and danced with pain, his blood-flowing fast.

"Bad shot," cried Tessier. "I'll put the poor devil out of his misery."

"Dutch" Fritz had no great knowledge of his new land's language but when Tessier raised his revolver he knew enough to run. Like the speed of the mountain wind he fled for life down the narrow street.

Roaring with laughter Tessier sent shot after shot in the general direction of the flying lad. By a streak of good fortune, the whiskey, and the mirth of Tessier made his aim bad, and "Dutch" Fritz escaped with his life although to his dying day he bore a great scar on his wrist.

"Great sport," cried Tessier, as he entered the saloon and asked for more liquor of the attentive bartender.

"It was, sure," replied Haricart who when drinking never showed the effects of the liquor he drank. He grew always calmer, deadlier, more crafty with each drink. When in the stage that would mean hilarious intoxication for a white man, Haricart became a dangerous amn, like a wild beast, ready to rend and destroy any living thing that crossed his purpose.

The two men continued their debauch.

Alma Hampton across the street in her father's saloon was sensible of the dangerous proximity of the two men.

She had passed word to her father of the fact that Tessier and Haricart "were on a drunk" in the "Trust and Deposit" saloon, and "Old Bill" saw in a moment that there was war to the knife on between him and his recent allies. He armed himself and awaited any overt act on the part of his once pals.

"Don't you fear," said "Old Bill" to Alma. "We are better rid of that gang than have them about."

"But father," replied Alma, "aren't you in their power?"

"Shucks! Not a bit," replied "Old Bill," "I've known the kind of men I was dealing with for years. They can't put over anything on me. We are safe except from their open warfare or plots."

Alma was exceedingly pleased.

"Then all we need fear just now," she said, "is their coming over here and shooting up the place."

"Yes. But they won't come over here. It's too open. They might try to set us afire some night. They won't risk a daylight open fight."

"Old Bill" was right. The sounds of merriment, punctured by frequent revolver shots, came floating into the Bank Exchange from its rival saloon, but nothing more was seen of Haricart and Tessier.

Matters ran along thus until about nine o'clock that night. Alma was wondering where Hudson was, and how he fared.

As if speaking her name came a knock at the door. She opened it. An Indian whom she had never seen before stood in the doorway impassively holding out a note.

Alma took it. She saw it bore her name. The thought came to her that she did not know the hand-

writing. In fact she knew in some occult way that the note was from Arthur Hudson, but she suddenly remembered with a pang that neither she or Arthur had been sharp enough to arrange any code of secret signals so that any note sent by either would be known by each to be genuine.

"What a chump," thought Alma. "Arthur never has seen my handwriting. I have never seen his. We might get fooled by anyone knowing this fact. But no one knows it, so I guess we are safe."

Nevertheless she sharply questioned her auditor. The Indian was like most Indians, extremely non-committal.

"Where did you get this note?" asked Alma.

"White man," replied the Indian. "Stopped me on road, Fort Rae, said go 'Bank Exchange,' Yellow Knife, give note to Mees Alma Hampton. Yes, I go. Ugh!"

"What kind of looking man?" asked Alma in Indian pigeon English.

"No savey," replied the Indian.

"How white man look."

"No see. Half dark. Take not. Man give me two bits. Ugh!"

Alma understood that it was dark when the note was handed the Indian. He did not see the man who gave it close enough to give a description, but the man had told him to come to her and had given her proper direction to the Indian with a two bit (twenty-five cent) reward.

"I guess it's all right," thought Alma. "Come in, I will give you two bits more for your promptness."

The Indian nodded. He took the quarter a moment later and vanished into the gathering darkness.

"Meet me on the banks of Great Slave Lake where the Road Agent shot 'Pink' Maltby. Do not fail. It's very important, a life or death matter—" Arthur," Alma read.

"Gee," she said half aloud, "what has happened. I wonder what I ought to do. I don't know Arthur's handwriting. This seems all straight. I wonder if I have got up against a plant—no this is all right."

Stubbs, the news-boy who had been Alma's shadow since his arrival at the Bank Exchange, and who now was looked upon as one of its company chipped in at this point. He had noiselessly entered the room as Alma was reading the note.

"Say, Miss Alma," he asserted. "You go and meet yer feller. I ain't so big but I'll go too. You go foist. I'll foller ye. See?"

"Den if anythin' happens wot ain't right, I can perfect her," earnestly added the atom of boydom.

Alma laughed merrily. The idea of Stubb's acting as her protector was a funny one. But she saw his idea was a good one.

"You may be small but you've got sand," she told the boy. "Now I will put you wise to one thing—you may follow me. If it's a plant you can give the alarm. If it's all right Arthur Hudson will be glad to see us both, and it's better to meet no man in the dark without some boy or woman with one, eh?"

Stubbs was overjoyed.

"I tell yer, Miss Alma," he said, "I'm all to the good as a scout. Say, it's a great country. I'm beginning to like it almost as well as Noo Yoik. Say, but dat's de creamy city. Aw, wouldn't de bunch on Park Row give up de stuff to be in my shoes. A goin' to get even wid a lot o' stiffs like dat Har-cot and his ugly

side stiff Tessier, is wort' de mon' eh? We'll carry off de bundle under de wire by a nose. It's a case of 'de fav'rite wins at Brighton Beach race track' an' dey ajn't no odder horse in de bunch dat get's a look in."

"All right Stubbsey," replied Alma. "You're my Knight from now on."

Stubbs was vastly pleased. He didn't know what a "Knight" was like but if Alma appointed him to the position it must be something good.

At nine o'clock he and Alma mounted on two bronchos started for the tryst made by Hudson.

Alma went ahead. Behind her came Stubbs.

Alma who was wise beyond her age, had wrapped the feet of each horse carefully in burlap. Neither animal made any noise as he trotted along, although his speed had been reduced by the operation.

"We have plenty of time to get to the trysting place," Alma assured Stubbs, "but it's best to go still along the way. Tessier and Haricart are ready to do anything. They might pot us both out of the bushes any time."

Stubbs was never before on a horse in his life. But he made good weather of it, naturally liking the wild life of the territory, and he clung to his perch on the big broncho's back like a rider who had from birth, been used to the fast gait of a fiery North-West horse.

"I've got me gun," he confidentially told Alma. "If dat gang gets gay, I'll hand em a couple of sure-cure-for-de-blues."

So the two whiled away the time.

"Fall back, Stubbs," whispered Alma at length. "We are nearing the place where the Road Agent held up the coach."

As Alma spoke she dismounted.

She saw a tall form approaching from the dense woods at the side of the road.

"Is that you?" asked Alma.

"Hush," came a whispered voice.

Alma peered at the figure. Her hand stole to the revolver at her belt.

"Is that you, Arthur," she asked.

For answer over her head was thrown a great blanket. She tried to draw her revolver, to give a cry that would enlighten Stubbs. But the choking folds of the blanket stifled her.

A hand wrenched her revolver away. She was lifted with the greatest of ease, and felt herself carried away.

Stubbs meanwhile was peering down from his seat. He could see nothing.

"Goodness, but it's dark," he thought, "I never saw so much darkness in me bloomin' life. Where in de woid did Miss Alma git to."

Stubbs jumped from his horse. He ran swiftly to the point where Alma had disappeared.

"Hully Gee," he thought, "has de earth swallied her. Wot's dat?"

In the darkness toward the lake Stubbs caught sight of a queer, misshapen bulk.

It was the form of Alma being carried away by her abductors. Stubbs plucked his revolver from his belt. It was no pop-gun such as he bore when he entered the territory, but a grim weapon ready to do a man's work even if fired by a boy.

"Sav, shall I shoot? If I do I'll be just liable to hit Miss Alma," Stubbs argued. "No shots for dis kid. I'll follie dat spook up."

With no more noise than a cat would make the boy soon was directly in the wake of the abductors.

"Hully Gee," he thought, "t'ree Indian's—say, ain't dat, dat Frenchie, Jean Tessier; say wot de'ye tink o-dat?"

The party hurried to the lake side, Stubbs saw. Alma was struggling hard for freedom, but her struggles were useless. She was wrapped so tightly that her struggles nearly smothered her, but gave her no freedom.

"Dey's got yer, Miss," thought Stubbs. "It's up to me to help get yer free. Favor for favor, says me. Dey got ye, but dey ain't got me."

Soon the party of ruffians halted at the side of the lake. A canoe awaited them moored a few feet out in the water.

Stubbs laughed to himself. If there was anything on earth that Stubbs could do well it was to swim.

In his younger days he used to haunt East side docks near excursion steamers on the great East side of New York city. Then he would coax fun lovers on the boats to throw coins into the deep waters of the river. And Stubbs would beat the coins to the bottom with a great dive, every time.

"Say, if dose fellows take to de lake de'ys playin' me long suit," Stubbs thought.

The party hurried into the canoe. Indians soon sat at the paddles ready to start. Tessier in triumph gave the order to "give way."

But quicker than thought Stubbs had vanished into the water.

He hustled around behind the canoe.

One little hand grasped it.

As the Indians started the craft with swift, powerful strokes, bearing Alma Hampton away to an unknown, horrible captivity, behind deep in the water with only the tip of his nose showing, followed Stubbs, a passenger unknown to the abductors, and one liable to make much trouble for triumphant Jean Tessier, who laughed in glee when he thought how easily he had secured his prey, Alma Hampton.

"I'll have a pretty little wife soon," he whispered, "and later I will get my share of 'Old Bill' Hampton's estate."

Just then Stubbs took a firm grip on the ring in the bow of the canoe, to which he had attached himself.

"Say, you may be fooled, likewise sucked in" he said to the swirl of waters about him.

Up the lake the canoe sped at frantic speed.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARTHUR HUDSON'S COUNTER-PLOT.

Arthur Hudson bowled along at a fair jog as soon as he had left Yellow Knife.

He first proceeded directly along the Fort Rae road, and soon had passed the scene of the hold up, and was several miles toward the fort.

At a point about five miles from Yellow Knife was a trail that led over the mountains to the Bad Lands, where there was little vegetation and therefore not much animal life. Trappers kept away from the Bad Lands, and so the trail was little frequented.

Hudson had planned to go along this trail for a mile, then strike into the woods and camp. The camp would

be his base of supplies. He could "stake-out" the pack-horse, that is tie it to a long lariat or rope of twisted horse hair. This rope, fifty feet in length, was attached to a long spike, to be driven firmly into the ground. The horse thus had much liberty of action in grazing, and yet also was firmly tethered.

"With a camp and plenty of supplies, an extra horse, right here, near Yellow Knife, yet far away enough to be safe from prying eyes, I can act as a pretty able scout," thought Hudson.

He proceeded steadily watching carefully for any sign of an ambush. He knew that somewhere along the road an attempt would be made to assassinate him by Haricart, and Tessier.

"They never would let me get away without an attempt to get me," Hudson thought. "Well, we will try and see they don't."

He pulled his horse up sharply.

The road was almost roofed in interlacing trees. Around him the great silent forest lay. The road was narrow at this point.

Yet Hudson hesitated.

He saw a great bush had apparently sagged down from the leafy bower above him, until it hung down about where a man would strike it in passing.

There was nothing unusual about this. In these trackless wilds trees and bushes often obstructed even the best of territorial roads.

But there was something that told the keen sense of Hudson that there was danger ahead of him.

What it was he did not at first see.

Then his keen mind spelled out the story.

"Oh, ho!" he thought. "There's a wrinkled leaf that has caught my eye. How did that come there?"

Hudson knew that a dead leaf on a shrub was a natural proceeding; but he further knew well that a wrinkled leaf, not dead but simply dying in the heat of the sun of the late afternoon, was not a natural proceeding.

"That bush did not grow there," Hudson analyzed. "If it had the leaf would be dead not heat crumpled. That shrub was put there recently. Why, and by whom?"

The more he gazed the less did Hudson like the appearance of the shrub.

Finally he dismounted drawing the bridle reins forward over the horse's head, and trailing them on the ground. A North-West horse will stand for hours thus "hitched."

As careful as a wolf around a trap Hudson approached the shrub with much caution.

Long he eyed it when underneath it, but not touching it. His head was several inches above those of the average man, but he saw that he could walk underneath the shrub and not disturb it.

"I would hit it breast-high if I was on horse-back," Hudson thought. "Oh, I see."

His eye had caught sight of a strong wiry horse-hair twisted rope that ran from the bush to the trunk of one of the interlacing trees, and then vanished.

"Why is that rope there," went on Hudson. "Trees don't grow ropes even in Mackenzie territory. Human fingers put that rope there. Now why?"

Hudson made a wide detour. He approached the shrub from the opposite side.

"Well, quite simple."

He saw the twisted rope led to the tree, down the leafy trunk, and then vanished in the thick underbrush.

"I'll investigate that thicket," he thought.

Keeping on the far side of the thicket Hudson soon came across the shot gun.

"Well by Gosh!" he muttered. "That's a pretty nifty contraption. Injun brains put that up. If it had not been for that withered leaf, one chance in a million leaves for me, I'd run into this trap. Brushed that thing aside as I rode onward and bang!—all over for me. Shot would have cut me in two about at my waist line."

Deeply pondering Hudson stood near the infernal machine.

"Who's gun is this," he wondered. "Well by Cricket! It's 'Old Bill' Hudson's."

The reputation of "Old Bill" as a friend of smugglers, thieves, the flotsam and jetsam of the derelict's of life flashed through Hudson's brain.

"Don't think 'Old Bill' is an assassin," Hudson finally determined. "It's his gun, all right. I've seen it stand behind the bar in the 'Bank Exchange' many a time. Wonder how it got here."

Then Hudson determined on a counter-plot, if the gun was the physical manifestation of a plot.

He cautiously returned to where his horses were awaiting him. These he led far into the woods where he hitched them.

Then he took from his pack-horse a roll of blankets. He next divested himself of coat and trousers, putting on a new suit from his stock packed in his valise.

The other suit was wrapped about the roll of blankets.

It looked like the body of a man. When this roll had been laid in the road directly under the bush, Hudson led out the pack-horse and the riding broncho, to a point down the road where they were allowed to feed. They looked as if they had strayed away from the man, apparently lying dead in the road, after he had fallen from the riding animal.

"Stage well set," laughed Hudson. "I fancy that will put one over on the enemy."

To cut a long lithe pole of aspen was Hudson's next step.

Then he looked carefully to his weapons. His revolvers were all right.

He next unslung his long rifle, and saw to it that its magazine was well filled. Then he hid himself in the bushes out of the line of fire from the masked battery but where he could command any approach to it.

With his long aspen wand-like pole he pushed the bush aside sharply as he knew a rider would do as if he saw it overhanging in the road.

"Whang!"

The concealed shot-gun sent a sweeping cyclone of bullets directly over the road. The bush was torn and riddled by the shot.

"Whew?" muttered Hudson. "A fine chance I would have had if I had pushed away that bush from my horse."

With rifle ready, every sense acute Hudson waited.

A stealthy form came stealing down the road, keeping well in the bushes but proceeding along quite steadily, but craftily.

Hudson saw the fellow stand watching. When the man's eyes caught sight of the apparently dead man lying in the road, and the two horses grazing further down the dusty highway, he gave a subdued war whoop, and drawing an ugly looking knife rushed to

the figure lying so still and plunged his knife into the prostrate shape.

As the blow fell Hudson stepped out of his hiding place. His rifle, long, deadly was at his shoulder. His two eyes keen and piercing glanced along the barrel. The muzzle was trained directly at the head of the thug ready to blow him into eternity.

"Throw up your hands," purred the steady voice of Hudson.

The fellow whirled to uprightness.

"Drop the knife, or I'll blow you into hell."

The miscreant let the knife fall. Hudson kicked it out of the way.

"Hand's up! Don't you make a move," warned Hudson. "Now who are you?"

The miscreant replied by a shrug of the shoulder.

"Ugh!" he said, "White man, he win."

"An Indian," said Hudson slowly, "a dirty Black-foot—no from your head-dress you are a Sioux."

"Ugh! Me Sioux," rumbled the Indian his hands high above his head and little beads of perspiration showing on his copper, snakey face. It was all this Indian stoic allowed to be seen of his fear of Hudson.

"You bet you're a Sioux," replied Hudson. "Only a Sioux would try that kind of a plant."

The Indian shrugged his shoulders.

"Who sent you to do this dirty trick?" asked Hudson.

The Indian did not reply.

"Not going to give away your employers eh?" added Hudson. "All right. Keep your secret."

The Indian still remained impassive with his hands stretched high toward the heavens.

"I fancy I'll just take you in the woods and tie you up to a tree, gagged, and just let you die there of slow thirst and starvation, or I will turn you loose, and give you a big bottle of whiskey if you tell me the truth."

"Give whiskey. I tell," said the Sioux with glistening eyes.

"I'm right," remarked Hudson, "a man would go always right in dealing with Sioux if he would give them a whisky bribe. I think a Sioux would sell his soul for red-eye—if he had a soul to sell—I never thought the dogs had any in spite of what white people think."

The Sioux was quickly disarmed by Hudson.

"Now tell your story," he said, "as he showed the Indian a quart bottle of whiskey which he took from the pack-horse."

"What you want," asked the Indian.

"Are you one of Chief Haricart's men?"

"Yes."

"Did he tell you to rig up that infernal machine?"

"Yes."

"Did he give you the gun?"

"Yes."

Hudson's face cleared. He knew now that "Old Bill" Hampton had no hand in the attempt at his murder. He was glad.

"Where did Haricart get 'Old Bill's' gun?" he asked.

"Stole it; pinch out bar-room," replied the Indian.

"Hum! What's your name?"

"Howling Wolf."

"Oh, yes, I know you," said Hudson. "You used to hang about the Bank Exchange."

The Indian nodded again.

"What else did you do for Haricart besides build this infernal machine?" queried Hudson.

"Take note—give it your gal, Alma," replied the Sioux.

"What?"

"Ugh."

"Who gave you the note?"

"Chief."

"Haricart?"

"Yes."

Hudson's mind was ablaze with suspicion.

"When," he demanded.

"To-night early part this sleep."

"Did you give the girl the note?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"Not anything."

"Did you know what the note contained?"

"No."

"What did Haricart say when he gave you the note?"

"Nothing. He tell me give note girl; no sabe if she ask what I am."

Haricart sent Howling Wolf with a note, to Alma, Hudson pieced out, telling Howling Wolf not to let Alma know who sent him, or from where he came.

"Except," went on the Indian, "I to say you gave me note, off Fort road, to girl."

"You red devil," translated Hudson, "Haricart told you to tell Alma I gave a note to you to give her. What else did Chief Haricart say?"

"He no talk with me. He tell Jean Tessier, say dat girl she meet you, they take her—something like dat. I no sabe."

The Indian's words died in a soft mutter.

But Hudson read between his words. He brought a mental picture to his mind.

"The gang have abducted Alma," he moaned. "I see it all. The note was anothr dirty Sioux trick. Oh, why did I not let all my handwriting be seen by Alma. I don't think she has ever seen any of it. She must have, been lured somewhere—where?"

He continued his questioning of the Indian.

"How far is it to Haricart's camp?"

"Not far."

"It's on Great Slave Lake, isn't it?"

"Yes—MacLeod Bay."

"You mean the part of the lake they call MacLeod Bay?"

"Yes."

"Then it is about five miles from here to the Chief's camp."

"Yes."

"East or West?"

"Dunno."

"Could you get there alone?"

"Sure."

"If I give you a big barrel of whiskey, a pony, flour for twenty moons, blankets, a rifle and lots of ammunition—say for twenty moons—will you take me to the Chief's camp?"

Howling Wolf's eyes gleamed.

Here was a wonderful bribe. With all the things Hudson had enumerated he would be the richest Sioux in the territory. What if treachery gained the baubles. Wasn't Haricart rich by treachery?

Howling Wolf was tempted. He fell like a Sioux without a tremor.

"How I know I get fings?" he asked.

"You'll get em all right," replied Hudson. "Word of a white man, good, you know, my word good."

The Indian nodded. He knew Hudson's reputation for good and fair dealing with the Indians around the Bank Exchange.

"All right," Howling Wolf said. "You come. I got canoe."

Only waiting to stake out his stock near running water, in the center of thick woods, and cacheing his goods so no white wolf would destroy his stores, Hudson followed the Indian back toward a little shaded point of land where the crafty Sioux had hidden his canoe. Hudson saw to it that he carried a fair supply of food.

Well armed, and ready for the fray, the canoe with Hudson and the Indian was soon headed for the Haricart camp.

It was a desperate undertaking Hudson knew.

Chief Haricart and his band of Indians, crooked whites fully as bloodthirsty as the Indians, half breeds, made the odds as fifty is to one against Hudson, but he never stopped for a second.

"If I can free Alma," he thought, "she and I can fight more than Haricart's band."

Under the mighty arm of the savage thoroughly the ally of Hudson, due to his amazingly generous bribe, the light canoe leaped over the still waters of the lake.

Ahead Jean Tessier, and his precious freight, Alma Hampton, were making a desperate speed.

And deep down in the water clinging still to the Tessier canoe was hurled along brave little Stubbs, happy as a king, a very fish in the water, and with a merry smile on his face.

"Say, sport," he said to himself, "dis is de longest ride I ever had free, but my oh my, I'll be to de finish, at dat."

The two canoes, now only three miles apart whirled over wave and shallow eddy.

What would be the fate of those in the two canoes, Hudson wondered.

CHAPTER IX.

A TERRIBLE JOURNEY.

"Hol' fast, canoe take big jump."

Thus Howling Wolf cautioned Hudson after he had hurried the canoe in which both were riding for more than an hour over the surface of Great Slave Lake at an alarming burst of speed.

In the half light of the early hours of the day after midnight, Hudson glanced around.

He trembled at the sight about him.

The lake had narrowed into a sort of bay. Across this the canoe was flying and as Hudson gazed the frail bark craft slipped directly at a sheer unobstructed precipice of great white rock, that seemed to tower a mile high over their heads.

The lake came flush to the bottom of the awful precipice, and from a dull horrid roaring that came from the direction they were going, it seemed to Hudson as if they would dash into the foam of the surf that was beating on the tremendous rock, and that their canoe would be at once dashed to bits.

"Look out, Howling Wolf," cried Hudson. "If you

get in that surf there, you will be dashed into bits. If the canoe is sunk, we can never climb up the steep face of that precipice to safety."

Hudson knew that Great Slave Lake was a fearful power when it was lashed under the whip of the sudden and quickly ended storms that often rage in the great North-West.

It was evident to him that a storm had passed a few hours before at this point and the roar he heard was the surf it had raised in passing.

"You sit still," commanded Howling Wolf. "No danger. I all right."

Deeply excited and fearing every moment that he would feel the crash of the canoe on the rocky shore, Hudson clung for dear life to the side of the canoe, which was now going faster as the surf and the stalwart arm of the Indian sent it toward the rocks.

"Look out, I say," called Hudson again. "Don't you see that we are in a shore current and will be on the rocks in five minutes."

Even as Hudson spoke the current acquired a terrible velocity. Each moment added to the speed.

Howling Wolf had ceased paddling. He sat still in the center of the canoe only now and then seeming to give direction to the craft.

"You fool Indian," yelled Hudson now thoroughly aroused.

"You keep still," shouted back the Indian. "I know."

Hudson saw that he must need obey. There was no other course to take.

The canoe was well toward the shore now.

The waters boiled and hissed with tremendous convulsions about them.

A wave dashed hissing aboard the canoe.

Hudson started to bail it out quickly.

"The water is burning hot," he yelled.

He knew in a moment that the canoe was rushing through a fearful boiling geyser. They were in the center of a spouting mountain of boiling water, which if the canoe swamped could only end their lives with one burst of deadly agony.

"I can feel the sides of the canoe get hot," yelled Hudson. "Howling Wolf, retrace your steps. Get out of this infernal place, quick."

Howling Wolf shook his head.

"White man sit tight," he replied. "Leave to me all. Get all safe out. Ugh."

The canoe meanwhile sped forward.

Then it hesitated. Prodigious streaks of foam were seen on every side.

Suddenly, extremely suddenly, the canoe trembled, seemed about to sink, righted itself—and then—

"It is whirling around in a circle," shrieked Hudson now almost beside himself with terror. "We are whirling about in a great, horrible circle."

He spoke the truth.

The canoe was evidently slowly whirling around from North to South.

The edge of the whirl was seen by Hudson to be a great belt-like-strip of foaming water.

Glancing over the side of the canoe, it looked to Hudson as if he and Howling Wolf stood at the top of a long funnel of smooth, shining, jet-black water, that made a sort of fierce tunnel, from which vomited great jets of steam, and from which came an awful appalling roar like the great thunders of the wonderful cataract of Niagara.

The whole atmosphere seemed to be trembling with the splendid convulsion through which nature was passing.

"We are in a great whirlpool," yelled Hudson to Howling Wolf. He strained every nerve to make himself heard, he knew he was yelling at the highest notes of his voice, yet the sound seemed in the awful din about him to be only a mere whisper.

"Keep mouth shut; no get hurt down throat," yelled back Howling Wolf, who took the horrible situation the canoe was in quite as a matter of fact.

"To tell a man to keep still when he was drifting about in a big whirlpool of boiling water, sounds fine, now don't it," thought Hudson. "I have a good mind to put a bullet through that infernal Indian's head."

Then he thought changed to the idea that this plan would be quite foolish, for Howling Wolf was his only chance for life, and to remove it would be like cutting off one's nose to spite one's face.

All this time the canoe was spinning round and round.

Now and then a great wave would dash the canoe upward, and Hudson would feel dizzy and faint as he was rushed up toward the sky at frightful speed.

Then with a plunge that seemed to drop him to the uttermost end of time, the canoe would fall far down into the depths of the horrible whirlpool.

"I guess this is our last plunge to death," Hudson would think every time the canoe descended.

But when the Indian's strong arm righted it and it continued on its long curve around the great whirlpool, Hudson would take courage again.

"I wonder if this Sioux knows his business," Hudson thought. "If this is the way to Haricart's camp of thieves, he can keep his old camp. I'll get ashore and stay there."

But a thought of Alma's peril steadied Hudson's shattered nerves. Brave as a lion under ordinary circumstances he was "up in the air" when he was brought face to face with the terrible situation that now faced him.

But he soon pulled himself together.

The canoe suddenly took a northerly direction.

Hudson saw that Howling Wolf had paddled with great strength right into what appeared to be a great cloud of vapor and rising steam.

But that there was intent in his deed showed quickly.

The canoe was now on an even keel, and was hurrying along in semi-darkness by great wooded shores of wonderful height, up a sort of creek, in perfectly still water.

"Is it hot?" thought Hudson.

He trailed his hand over the side of the canoe.

"No it is regular cool lake water again," he replied to his own thought.

Howling Wolf hurried the canoe forward.

"That was one of those peculiar freaks of nature," thought Hudson, "a boiling spring, or geyser of water right in the lake. There must be a crack in the bottom there which lets up the fires of some concealed volcano to make such a wonderful whirlpool."

He now saw that in some way Haricart had discovered that hidden behind the geyser was the creek the two were now passing along.

"Haricart saw that the geyser could be passed by descending its fearful depths," remarked Hudson to Howling Wolf.

"Sure," replied the stolid Indian. "Not bad like

looks. Only go down few feet. Tink go down hell, eh?"

Hudson nodded.

A single flicker of amusement was all that the Sioux allowed himself. It passed over his coppery visage and was gone like the flash of a sun-ray.

"No one would ever dare to try that wonderful descent unless he knew the secret perfectly," added Hudson. "So far as surprise by the Great Slave Lake route Haricart has chosen a perfectly safe position."

Hudson glanced at the frowning crags around him.

"Only an Airman," he added, "can attack Haricart from the shores."

His heart sank when he thought of the difficulty of rescuing Alma from Haricart and Tessier's clutches.

"I must learn how to get to the secret camp of this gang first," Hudson muttered.

Then he turned toward Howling Wolf.

"How do you get down that whirlpool," he asked.

"Don't go down," replied the Indian. "Just looks like so."

"What is the secret of getting into the mouth of the creek?"

"Keep righ'on, to right; you get out bimeby."

The extreme simplicity of the entire proceeding made Hudson smile.

"Got scart at nothing," he remarked. "We don't really go down, we just cross that big whirlpool, eh?"

"Yes."

"Keep always to the right?"

"Yes."

"That is in going in."

"Yes."

"How about coming out?"

"Go West."

"Just paddle boldly in and keep paddling?"

"Yes."

Hudson laughed in glee. Here was what looked like a fearful obstacle to the succor of Alma, smoothing itself out, and ending in being no obstacle at all.

"You take good care, stick by me. Land now, bimeby."

Thus spoke Howling Wolf. He was slackening the speed of the canoe.

Far ahead Hudson could see gleaming lights, a large camp-fire, slouching forms, and he knew that he was nearing the haunts of the Haricart gang.

The canoe grated on the shore. It stopped.

"Come long," whispered Howling Wolf.

Hudson obeyed. It was a thrilling moment. He knew that the treachery of Howling Wolf might be shown any moment, and that he might be turned over to the vengeance of the Haricart gang at a breath.

Hudson shuddered to think what would be his fate, alone in these fastnesses, with Haricart and Tessier free to wreck their vengeance upon his captive body.

But he had gone too far to retreat.

Having trusted Howling Wolf so far he must trust him to the end.

"You hide in woods," grunted the Indian after leading Hudson a few feet up a steep bluff. "I come bimeby."

"How you find me?" queried Hudson.

"Howling Wolf know; you no fear. I find."

Thrust ashore in a wild country, miles from the nearest habitation with only the slender stock of provisions he had taken from his store on his pack-horse between him and starvation, was rather of an unpleasant situation. By all chances Hudson saw, he was in deadly peril. But he also saw that he must stand fast and wait and see just what Howling Wolf would do.

"All right," he whispered, "get back as soon as you can."

Howling Wolf disappeared in the darkness.

A voice struck keenly on Hudson's ear.

"Hudson! Oh you Hudson!"

It came clear and in a childish treble.

"I'm certainly going mad," thought Hudson. "I hear a voice, a childish voice calling my name. Of course that is merely the beginning of madness. I will be a maniac and get to tear up trees, and eat roots soon."

"Hudson."

Again came the whisper.

"Here I go, very crazy," muttered Hudson. "Crazy as a bed-bug. No hope. The padded cell for mine."

The voice continued. Then there came out of the darkness a tiny form which darted up to the panic stricken man.

"Oh you Hudson," the voice said. "Ain't dat you? Say, sport, dis is yer old pal Stubbsey."

Hudson came to himself with a shock.

"Well I'll be—no I won't either," he said, "I'll be blessed. How by all that's good did you get here?"

"Aw say," replied Stubbs, for it was the redoubtable lad, "twas a dead picnic for me, dat swim up. See? I just catches on to de back end o-dat canoe. Den dey tows me along. Wy pal, I've hung on to der biggest excursion steamer on de East River, in Noo Yoik, till dey was way by Hell Gate. Dis wos a snap. Canoe can't go like one o' dose steamers, eh?"

"Where is Alma?"

Stubbs rapidly told of the abduction, the note sent by Haricart, so by piecing out what Howling Wolf had told him, with the facts presented by Stubbs, Hudson knew the entire programme of the Haricart gang.

"But how did you get by the boiling geyser?" queried Hudson of the brave boy.

"Say dat was tuff," Stubbs replied. "Ge, pal, but de water began to get hotter and hotter. No boiled Stubbs in Great Slave Lake soup, sez I to meself. So I quits de canoe and hikes out for de shore."

"Did you know where the shore was?"

"Nit."

"How did you know which way to swim?"

"Aw, say, you makes me laugh. Wot did I care about de shore. I knowed dis lake wa'n't no ocean. All I'se had to do was to swim, and keep a-swimmin'. I'd hit a shore some time."

"Don't you think you took a long chance?"

"Oh, say wots eatin' ye. I've been takin' 'long chances' all me life—didn't I tell yer I comes from New Yoik? Aint livin' der takin' long chances every day? I guess yes."

"When you got ashore what did you do?"

"Hustled."

"How?"

"I tinks to meself, tinks I,—now Stubbsey you stick by de shore. Dey ain't no sense in gettin' lost in dose woods up dere to your right, even if you don't get lost, tinks I, some an-i-mer'll get yer. So I sticks down by de water. I was pikin' along hitting only de high places wen I hears two men a spieling at each other. I draws me near. Say, twas you and dat big Indian dey sends to Miss Alma wid dat note. I gets me lamps on ye by a-cralin' up close. Den I talks yer name. See?"

"Say, why didn't you come right up to me an speak right out?" asked Hudson.

"Did yer ever go up to a mule and speak out loud, suddin like?"

"No—but what's that got to do with your speaking to me."

"Ah, gow on. Yer like a mule sudden like—he kicks and you might shoot. See?"

"Oh, you feared that I might shoot you?"

"Or stab me," replied Stubbs. "Dis place ain't no society hand me out. I didn't tink it safe to waltz up and hand me card to yer. Me and de Coroner ain't big friends yit. We don't want to know each odder better at dat."

"So you thought best to speak my name until I identified you?"

"You bet, an' I scrooched low behind dat tree, over dere, while yer was indemnifying me. See?"

"You are a brave boy, and will make a great woodsman some day," said Hudson.

"Tanks, as de feller said when dey was a hangin' him. He asks, whedder his 'neck-tie fitted,' he was dat careful, I'm some on being careful meself."

"Now what had we better do?" remarked Hudson more to himself than to the lad.

"Got any fodder," put in the boy. "I'm dead to de woild. Got ter eat er I'm a dead one."

Hudson gave the half starved Stubbs some hard-tack from his scanty store and while the boy ate, in his own mind considered his situation.

"I guess I'm up against it," Hudson thought. "Alma a prisoner. I here on the shores of this inaccessible place, surrounded by foes, and with only this boy to help me. Well, we must fight it out. Somehow or other we can win and if we can not win we can die trying."

As Hudson spoke he heard the sound of a canoe grating on the shore of the lake where he and Howling Wolf had so lately landed.

"There comes the Sioux," he whispered to Stubbs. "We will go down to meet him."

The pair cautiously hurried to the shore.

There bottom up lay a birch-bark canoe.

But no one was in sight.

"Howling Wolf," whispered Hudson.

There was no answer.

Hudson stepped forward and grasped the bow of the canoe. He started to pull it up on the shore further so a passing wave would not wash it out again into the lake.

As he did so in the darkness he saw another form grasp the other end of the canoe.

"Ugh!" the form spoke.

It was not Howling Wolf, Hudson saw directly.

It was a strange Indian, one of Haricart's gang, of course, Hudson thought.

"Ugh!" said the figure. "Dam canoe he skip."

The voice was strange. Hudson had never it before.

"Right canoe," added the voice.

"Ugh," said Hudson in reply in the deep guttural of the Sioux language.

Hudson felt the figure turning over the canoe. He assisted without protest.

"Bail heap much," muttered the figure.

Hudson stooped over to do as he was bid.

The Indian seemed to suddenly take alarm.

"Dat you, Howling Wolf?" he whispered drawing near to Hudson.

Hudson quietly drew his knife ready for trouble.

CHAPTER X.

ALMA HAMPTON'S DECISION.

"Here we are my pretty wild-cat."

Jean Tessier laughed as he carried Alma Hampton ashore at the great camp of Chief Haricart's gang.

Bound tightly by the heavy folds of the blanket which had been thrown over her head, the unfortunate girl did not see the perils of the geyser. It was not the policy of any one in authority to shoot the whirlpool so that any passenger, even if a prisoner, could see the process.

So Alma had been kept tightly enveloped in the blanket until the camp of the gang was reached.

She felt herself carried to some place in a house. She knew it was a house, or some place covered, and with floors, because she could hear Tessier's feet beating upon planks as he hurried forward.

"There you are my honey peach," she heard Tessier say.

Then the blanket was withdrawn and Alma stood up. She glanced curiously around.

She was in a strange room, about ten by twelve feet in dimensions. A table, three chairs, a couch, and the entire furnishings of the room had passed before her eyes.

"Like your bridal chamber?" asked Jean Tessier, who stood by a tiny lamp standing upon the table.

"My what?" queried Alma.

"Your bridal chamber," mocked the thug.

"Guess again," cried Alma unterrified. "No wedding bells yet for mine."

"They will ring nevertheless," sneered Tessier. "And it's me for the rôle of happy bride-groom."

"I will not marry you," replied Alma. "I would rather die first."

"You will marry me and die soon after," rejoined Tessier with devilish cunning.

"What do you mean?"

"We are going to send for a clergyman, the real thing, a regular clergyman," added Tessier. "He will marry us."

"Never."

"That will make you my legal bride," the ruffian added.

"We will pass our honeymoon here, and then you will fall into the lake and 'accidentally drown.'"

Alma shuddered.

"That will make you a dead bride and me your legal heir," mocked Tessier. "We have arranged to get rid of your father, 'Old Bill.' Your lover, Arthur Hudson is now dead."

"You lie."

"No, my dear sweet Alma Hampton, I don't lie," went on Tessier as if he took pride in revealing to the poor captive all of the depth of villainy in his plot against her, "I am telling you the truth."

"Where did Arthur Hudson die?" queried Alma.

"He was found dead with a bullet in his heart lying on the Fort Rae road. Howling Wolf who assisted in the deed that ended the dog's life has just come into camp with the news."

Alma was non-plused. If Tessier spoke the truth there was

no possibility of her rescue. The only man who could guess where she was was now cold in death. Her father would never dream that she was a prisoner in the Haricart camp. If he missed her he would only think she was lost in the great woods and would direct all the energy of a search in that direction.

"Tessier," Alma said at length. "I don't believe a word you say. Arthur Hudson is not dead. I know he isn't. If he was I would feel it. I feel that he is alive and I believe that he will rescue me from your clutches."

Tessier glanced uneasily behind him. He had no relish to meet Hudson dead or alive. He had not forgotten the fact that Hudson could shoot and he further well remembered the strength with which he was flung through a window by the young faro dealer.

"Well, Hudson is dead all right," rejoined Tessier, remembering the report from Howling Wolf. "He can't aid you. You're in for the rôle of the blushing bride, and the early death of the bride, let me tell you, just as soon as Haricart sends a clergyman to us here."

"Where is Haricart?"

"That is my business. He isn't here. I'm in command alone here. You are at my mercy. I have a notion to tame you right now."

Tessier made a motion toward the girl, his evil face ablaze with rage.

"You she-devil," he sneered, "you have jeered at me enough. I will have my revenge now. You haven't a weapon about you. You are defenseless and my strength is twice that of yours. Now look out for yourself."

Tessier made a leap toward the girl.

Alma did not cower.

"Halt, or you're a dead man," she said easily and in a low tone.

Tessier recoiled.

In Alma's out-stretched hand glistened a big revolver.

"You fool," she said in a slow voice that sank into Tessier's brain. "It didn't come to your addled brain to search me after you took my belt and revolver away. Well, I had other weapons hidden. Do you think a frontier girl carries only a brace of guns at her belt? Keep off or I'll blow your cowardly head off."

Tessier stopped. He was baffled. He knew Alma would kill him as if he was a rat if he attacked her. She was armed now, and he cursed his folly in not thoroughly searching her while in the canoe. Now it was too late. The girl was a crack shot. If he attacked her she would kill him, and would kill all who tried to rescue him as long as she had a shot left.

Tessier stopped. He gnashed his teeth in rage. His eyes blazed.

"You she-devil!" he sneered. "But I can get you yet. I'll starve you into submission. Without further words Tessier turned on his heel and left the room. He clanged the big door to the room behind him. Its sound daunted the girl. She knew she was a prisoner.

Not given to mourning her plight, Alma soon was alert.

She examined the room carefully. There were only two narrow windows at each end. These were barred so that it would be almost impossible to pass through them.

"If I could change myself into a cat," she thought, "I might get through those bars. But unfortunately I can not."

Alma could see, however, quite a good share of the camp, from each window.

"What a barren, God forsaken spot," she thought. "I can see that the camp is made up in a form of a half circle. It must front the lake. Those log huts must be the white men's abodes. The teepees are where the Indians live. This must be the inner fortress in which I am kept."

By dint of some labor Alma managed to dig through one of the floor boards in one corner of the room. Then she applied her eyes to the place.

"Well, well!" she asserted with much pride. "That's a great find for me if we get ourselves out of here. My, but that's the great store house of smuggled goods."

Alma felt that in this room was stored the entire wealth of the crowd of thugs that made up Haricart's band. There must be furs of great value, silks brought from Ottawa, Toronto, or even from the far Orient, sent to these wilds, to pass along the overland, and underground passage to the United States.

"They can't get much 'over the border' where its civilized," said Alma. "They have to take this roundabout method. I'll bet there's a million or two dollars worth of property there."

Then she smiled amid her fears.

"The reward from the United States and the Canadian Government's alone for letting them know if this loot would make Hudson wealthy for life," Alma thought. "I am sure that he isn't dead. Tessier lied. I'm sure of it. I know Hudson isn't dead for if he was—why because—"

Even Alma could not help but smile at the inevitable reason of a woman that ended her last few words; "because."

"Ugh," she shuddered to herself as she heard the sound of scratching of a rat echo in her room. There's a rat. Oh, dear."

Her face went white. She had faced a gang of men intent on lynching a man whom she esteemed. She had faced Jean Tessier at the height of his bestial rage, without a quiver.

The sound of the scratching of a rat turned her sick and faint with fear.

The scratches continued.

"Where is that rat?" Alma thought. "The sounds are from the outside. The dirty thing is trying to gnaw in here. Oh dear, what shall I do?"

Alma stole softly to the window.

"Why its not a rat," she whispered to herself. "It's some one trying to get in through the window."

Her courage returned.

She drew her revolver and tip-toed over to the window. She saw a shape in the darkness. She peered through the narrow bars.

The figure outside stopped its work. It seemed to be looking at her.

"Oi soi," said the well known voice of Stubbs. "Is dat you, Miss Alma?"

With a smothered scream Alma leaned far toward the brave boy. There was no window glass to the barred windows, so she easily could hear what Stubbs was saying.

"Is dat you, Miss Alma?" again the boy whispered.

"God bless you, Stubbs," replied Alma. "Yes, I am here, a prisoner."

"Here take dis," Stubbs added.

Alma stretched out her hand. Stubbs put a little package in it.

"Wot is it?" repeated Stubbs after the girl had spoken.

"Say, its some of de stuff dat killed me fadder."

"What's that?" asked Alma.

"Good old Canadian white whiskey. It'll keep yer from a faintin' wen yer seen a rat, all right," replied the lad.

"What else is there in de package?"

"Food," the boy laughed. "Good for de gone feelin' wen yer ain't had no grub. Don't have to drink no healin' water to get dat hungry feelin'. See?"

"In mercy's sake tell me how you got here?"

"Aw, say dis ain't no time for a sobbin' out de story o' me life. You read de note in dat package. See? Dat'll put you wise."

"Can you wait?"

"Nit. Me frien' is awaitin' me. I'll see yer later, as de feller sez to de joiler wen he break's out of der jail."

"When will you return?"

"About an hour," replied Stubbs as he let himself slide down the side of the rough timbers of the building in which Alma was confined.

Alma saw that it was no great feat for Stubbs to climb up the side of the jail, or store house where she was confined. He was a lad who had often climbed higher heights in the chestnut groves about the city of New York in Westchester county, and had no trouble in scaling the comparatively easy sides of Alma's present place of confinement.

"I must read my note?" she said as she turned away from the window. "It is fortunate for us all that Tessier feels so sure of my not being able to escape that he had not placed even a guard about this building."

But when she stopped to think she did not see why Tessier should have thought a guard necessary. It was manifest that as Tessier saw her position she could not escape him.

While it was unfortunate that she was armed, Tessier knew that Alma could be starved out, but Alma when she saw some hard-tack, some jerked venison enough to last a week, felt sure that Tessier was not right in his surmises.

"I'll escape that villain," uttered Alma. "And when I do I'll well pepper his dirty hide."

The thought gave her strength. She turned to read her note.

"Do not fear. I am near you with Stubbs. Take courage—Arthur."

Alma gave a smothered scream of delight.

"What a liar that Tessier is," she thought. "I knew Arthur Hudson was not dead. With him outside along with Stubbs, and me here inside with a good gun in my hand, I guess I can face something more to be feared than that chump, French-Canadian, Tessier."

Alma wished she had pen and paper to immediately answer Hudson's note.

"That's his simon pure hand-writing," she murmured, slipping it into the neck of her blouse. "It would have saved a lot of trouble if I could have seen it before."

But Alma took courage and ate quite a hearty meal from the venison and hard-tack. She felt better able to cope with the situation.

She had need for strength a moment later when the door to her prison house opened and Jean Tessier entered once more. "Well, my pretty captive, are you hungry?" he asked.

Alma quietly took care to see that the table was between them and she held her revolver where Tessier could see it glitter.

"Very," she said, meekly.

"Are you willing to give in?"

"Do you mean, 'are you willing to marry me,' by that question?" asked Alma.

"Of course I do," replied Tessier.

"When will the clergyman be here?" lisped Alma in a soft tone.

Tessier was overjoyed.

"That's the talk," he said. "Bear up! Cheer up! The clergyman will be here to-morrow. Then we will be the finest pair of newly weds in the world."

"How about killing me, as you said?" asked Alma.

"Say, I've been thinking it over. What's the use of killing you. Say, we can put Chief Haricart under the lake waves instead of you. Then I'll be head of this gang. We can continue our game and there's big money in it."

"What's your game?"

"Smuggling."

"I see. Well, it's a plan to be thought over, eh? I kind of like it—and you, well, you are a fine looking man, when I come to look at you close."

Tessier's face beamed with pride. Alma, little witch, started in to flatter him. She had his measure in a moment.

"Say, ain't I the candy kid," Tessier thought. "This girl's gone dotty over me. Say—what?"

Alma continued to stroke down the fears of Tessier. She soon had him "eating out of her hand" as the expression goes.

"There's one thing you must do for me, Jean," Alma added, seeing that her blandishments were effective. "You must get me a big bolt to go on the inside of the door to my jail. You I will let in any time. But I'm afraid of the gang of ruffians you have here. A girl ought not to be left alone where any of Haricart's gang are, anyway, without a bolt to her room."

"I guess you're right," replied Tessier. "Haricart's gang isn't much fit for your company—or any decent woman's at that."

He left the room as he spoke and soon came back with a huge iron bolt which he quickly fastened on the door.

"There," he said. "You'll be able to get your beauty sleep here to-night. When I kick twice on the outside door you let me in."

"Of course. But you keep your distance, you know—"

"How long?"

"Wait anyway until after the clergyman gets here," said Alma in such a shy, sweet, timid way, that Tessier was overjoyed.

He nodded.

"Now I'll see that you have a dandy supper," he said as he left the girl.

"Well, of all the vain fools," soliloquized Alma. "Men are dead easy, anyway. Here's this dirty cur, smuggling Jean Tessier, thinks I'm crazy after him."

Determined to play the game out to its limit, Alma waited patiently.

Tessier soon returned with an Indian lad, the latter bearing a savory rabbit stew, and a big pannikin of earth, filled with cool water.

"Now you leave me, Jean—dear Jean," she said, languishingly.

Tessier hurried away dancing along like a great uncouth bear. He long had secretly nursed a great affection for Alma, and her apparent return of his feeling, made him act like a crazy man.

"Jean—dear Jean," said Alma to herself, after Tessier had left her, "I'll just shoot you dear Jean, as I would this rabbit I am going to eat; just as soon as I can get a fair chance."

Alma took two swallows of the toothsome stew.

"I wonder if its drugged," she thought. "Well, what if it

is. That bolt will keep any one out. They won't give me any drug to kill me. I'm too valuable until they marry me to Tessier to kill. Any way its a fine stew. Goes good on top of that venison, and hard-tack."

A healthy famished girl of twenty-two years of age can make a rabbit stew look queer in short order. Alma sat quietly in her chair thinking for some time after partaking of the stew.

"Seems to me we are going to win this game," she thought. "I have the strength of ten girls when I think that Hudson is so near. I wonder when Stubbs will be back?"

Her question was immediately answered. She heard the noise like the scratching of a rat at her window and hurried over to see Stubbs just unfastening a bar.

In a moment Stubbs slipped into the room.

"Aw say," he whispered in a smothered voice. "Quit yer squeezin'."

It is easy to understand just what happened to Stubbs. The boy looked around.

"How about dat door?" he asked.

Alma explained how she had got Tessier to place a bolt on it, which effectually kept out intruders.

"Say, ain't yer de boss jollier?" whispered Stubbs. "Say, you're almost able to keep up wid de New Yoik goils. Dere dey jolly all de time. Part o' de game der is to be a good jollier."

"I hated to do it," replied Alma. "But I had to because I am in desperate straights here in the hands of that awful man."

"You ain't goin' to be dere long. See?" replied Stubbs. "Me and Hudson is a goin' ter get yer out o' dis place. See?"

"That is easier said than done," replied Alma.

"Oh, I dunno. We've sent harder games dan dis over. See?" Alma smiled at the use of the word "we."

"Now dis is de game," added Stubbs earnestly.

"Very well. Tell it to me."

"Yer ain't to borrow no trouble."

"Did Arthur Hudson tell you to say that?"

"Sure."

"I ain't to 'borrow trouble,'" added Alma. "I wont. I have enough of my own without borrowing more."

"He means keep a stiff upper lip," put in Stubbs disgustedly.

"Play de game wide open. See? Don't let any one choke down de limit. Play de game as high as de sky. No limit. See?"

"Yes, I understand. You mean to take heart and struggle hard, and we will win in the end."

"Dat's it. Dat's wot I mean to say. Ain't dis gift o—langwise just foine ter have? You gets me meaning and hands it back to me loike me old schoolteacher in Cherry Hill, in little ole' New Yoik."

"Now then what next? It's your deal, Stubbsey," merrily replied Alma.

"I'll deal em, all right, all right, and de cards won't be marked. See? Now de rest o' my spiel comes quick. Der's goin' to be a rescue o' de beau-ti-ful maiden in his meller-drammer long 'bout midnight. See?"

"I suppose I'm the 'beautiful maiden.'"

"Your it! Meanwhile you're to hold two cards close up. It's a gentleman's game dis. Can't turn your head to get a drink wid out some feller's stealin' your chips."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Now look here, none of dis. Ain't dis Tessier person tryin' to steal you—ain't you one best bet o' Hudson's?"

Alma blushed.

"Nonsense," she said.

"Well say, he's havin' er fit to get out o' dis joint—riskin' his life for yourn ain't a sign of your bein' his goil, I tinks—nit."

"Never mind what Arthur thinks," replied Alma. "Tell me what he wants me to do."

"Gettin' ready to use de woid obey in de service right now, eh," put in Stubbs. "But I'll spare yer blushes, and gets down to brass tacks. See?"

"Very well," replied Alma, laughing in spite of herself. "Tell me what to do and I will do it."

"Dat's de talk. Gin it to me right over de plate. I'll send it ter de bleachers. Well, it's dis way. Arthur he says, dat he's comin' around dese diggins about 2 A. M., ternight, or tomorrow, which ever way yer likes it. It'll be dark o' de moon den."

"You mean that Arthur Hudson will be under my window here at 2 A. M., queried Alma.

"Yer next. Yer bet's down. Play it all to de case cards. Deuce, ten five, I marries em, says de clergyman, wid a smile."

Now the three last cards dealt at faro in the North West are

called "case cards." If you can pick them out in the order they are dealt you "call the turn." That means you get four times what ever stake you have wagered.

Alma knew this fact. She had "called the case cards" many a time in her own loved Bank Exchange.

"What's the five got to do with it," she asked.

"De five is what de clergyman get's for de ceremony."

"What does the ten stand for?"

"That's about all you have to pay for the first month's rent."

"And the deuce?"

"That's what comes after the honey-moon."

"You're a bright kid."

"None brighter."

"Now then you ruh away. I understand. I'll be ready to join you and Hudson at two o'clock this coming morn. And may God help us to get away from this awful gang of smugglers."

Hardly had Stubbs disappeared through the window and put back the iron bar so it would not show from outside that it had been removed, than a great hulking figure stole beneath her window.

Alma shuddered. It was Jean Tessier. He had appointed himself her guard and was patrolling his solitary self imposed post as she gazed.

"And Hudson is to be here at 2 o'clock," she shuddered. "He will meet Tessier. There will be a terrible battle. The whole camp will be aroused, and we shall all be slaughtered. What shall I do to warn Hudson?"

CHAPTER XI.

HUDSON SAVES HIMSELF.

"Dat you, Howling Wolf?"

The Indian repeated his words. He stooped low to see Hudson in the darkness.

Hudson dropped the canoe and prepared for a struggle. He knew that the Indian had detected him. He expected his shrill warwhoop would call down his villainous companions from all sides.

The Indian crouching low crawled toward Hudson. In his hand was his wicked looking knife.

Hudson in turn drew his knife.

Suddenly the Indian threw up his hands. The knife went skimming into the lake. The Indian staggered and fell. His head disappeared beneath water. There were a few convulsive tremors, all then becoming still.

Open mouthed; Hudson stood in wonder.

What had caused the Indian to fall, and drown in the lake. Was there some intangible something in the dread waters that had pulled down its victim.

While Hudson stood awe struck, the body of the savage, its eyes staring to the sky, cold in death, was tossed back into the lake and floating like a great log was lost in the murky night, and could now and then be glimpsed rising and falling, far out in the waters, by the pale gleam of the stars.

"Say, wot de ye tink o' me?" a shrill voice at Hudson's ear whispered.

It was Stubbs.

Overjoyed Hudson asked for an explanation.

"It was dis way," replied the boy. "I waited back dar wen youse was a lookin' at de canoe. I sees de big bloke a talkin' to yer, and I sez, sez I, dat ain't no howlin' wolf; dat wolf won't howl jest right for Mr. Hudson. So I sneaks me around behin' de Injun. Den when he pulls his sticker I swims out into de loike. I rushes in grabs me Injun by de foot—pulls him back, say he goes right down in deep water, me a hangin' on—say he was a deader in two minutes. My! how he did jump about"

"Well, you have killed your first Indian," remarked Hudson to the boy.

Stubbs was nearly crazed with glee.

"Say, wot de ye tink o' dat?" the boy cried. "Ain't I de goods? Why, de gang on Newspaper Row in Noo Yoik will be pale green wid envy. I, 'Kid' Stubbs have killed a real big Injun. Say, ain't dat great?"

The mere fact that the Indian might not have been as pleased as the boy with the operation did not appeal to Stubbs; for he knew that the savage would have killed him, as well as Hudson in a jiffy had he gotten the chance.

"Well, there's one enemy the less," remarked Hudson. "But there's enough left. Did you see Alma?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"Ah, gwon, sport. She's dead gone on you, if dats what she wanted me to tell you—if it aint, why, she's dead gone just de samey."

It was Hudson's turn to blush. But he didn't. He just laughed. "This isn't a case of romance," he replied. "It's a case of rescue. How is she?"

"Perky, fine and dandy," rejoined Stubbs. "Full of fight and wot de Statemen give each odder."

"What's that?"

"Cold lies—odderwise de-ploom-e-cy."

"You mean diplomacy."

"Same thing—lies."

"Is that what Alma is telling?"

"Say sport, she's givin' dat Tessier de biggest line of con dat any woman ever laid over on a man since Eve put up de con game foist on Adam. Why, Tessier just eats it up. See?"

Under repeated questions, Hudson got finally from Stubbs all about the manner in which Alma was fooling Tessier.

He shook his head trying to think that the means were justified by the end, although Alma practicing deceit and womanly wiles rather went against his will. He wished it had not been necessary.

"You are sure you got the message straight?" asked Hudson of Stubbs. "We are to be under her window about two o'clock this morning, and she is to be ready for an escape?"

"Surest thing you know," answered the gallant boy.

"Well, all we have to do is to await the hour," added Hudson. But as he spoke the form of Howling Wolf was seen approaching by water in his canoe.

"How," greeted the Indian in low accents in his usual laconic manner.

"How," replied Hudson. He waited for the Indian to continue knowing the Sioux nature so well. An Indian does not speak without great deliberation.

"Tessier plum crazy," finally said the Indian.

"Why?"

"He send me take speech-speech, Haricart."

"He has sent you to take a message to Haricart?" translated Hudson.

"Yes."

"Get clergyman, Alma ready and willing to marry him."

"De-ploom-e-cy," thought Hudson remembering Stubbs' word.

"I see," he spoke aloud. "Now you better go, of course, but don't you find Haricart. See?"

"Ugh," grunted Howling Wolf.

"Then you take a note I will give you to 'Old Bill' Hampton. If you do not fail us you will be made the richest Sioux in the territory. Think of the fire-water; the blankets, the horses, skins, tepees, and wives you can have; you will be the biggest Chief in the country."

Stoic as he was Howling Wolf's eyes gleamed with pride. Hudson saw that he had a faithful ally. Cupidity is after all, a great aid to a commander of men.

Hudson rapidly wrote on the back of an envelope the chief facts of the momentous events of the past few hours, since he left the Bank Exchange. After assuring 'Old Bill' of Alma's present safety he scrawled his name, with directions to any rescuing party how to pass the geyser to get safely to the camp of the smugglers.

"There, Howling Wolf," Hudson remarked. "Here is the note. If you deliver it and do not fail, your fortune is made."

"Ugh," replied the Indian. "I deliver paper ting, if I go hell to do it."

"Indians have heard of hell any way in this territory," laughed Hudson. "Now be off—its important to hurry."

Two seconds later Howling Wolf was merely a dot on the sky where the Great Slave lake seemed to join it; he was paddling at a speed that would take him into Yellow Knife in two or three hours, Hudson saw.

Then Hudson turned to Stubbs.

"How are you on swiping things?" he asked of the boy.

Stubbs grinned. His "sneaking" of sundry apples, and bananas from divers Italian vendors in the streets of his beloved "Noo Yoik," came to the boy's mind.

"Aw, pretty fair," he grinned.

"I don't want to aid and abet any lad in petty thieving but this time I am going to ask you to 'sneak' something," added Hudson.

"Wot?"

"Do you think you can get into a tepee of one of the Indians and 'pinch' a wolf skin?"

"Surest ting in de wold?"

"I want you to get me a wolf-skin, that has been tanned with the head of the animal on the skin. Every Indian tepee has several on the floor or ground just as we use carpets or rugs, as floor coverings."

"Sure."

"You crawl around back of one of the tepees there far out toward the line of huts in Haricart's camp. Get busy, kid there isn't much time."

Stubbs did not flinch from the perilous mission. If detected it meant sudden death. If not seen it meant that he would aid Hudson in some trick or plan that was to save the party; that was enough for Stubbs.

"I must watch for the Indian dogs," thought Stubbs.

Every tepee had as guard the usual attribute of an Indian's home, a pack of fierce dogs, half mongrel and half wolf of the wilds, and about the most savage animal on earth. No Indian dog ever made friends with a white man.

So Stubbs carefully crawled back to the storage ware-house, passing Jean Tessier who was still acting as guard under Alma's window, so close that he could have touched his great foot if he had wished.

Then Stubbs crawled to the ware-house where he had seen at his last trip a quantity of meat ready for use. He "swiped" several great bones, filled his pockets with scraps and then ready for battle crawled to the farthest tepee way out in the shadow of the great forest.

He had not gotten within fifty feet of the tepee when with a great bound three savage Indian dogs bounded out to meet him with horrid yelps and with jaws that were opened so wide that in the starlight they looked to Stubbs like great caverns.

Before the animals had attacked him, Stubbs hurled them a big bone of meat.

The yelps of rage changed to snarls of pleasure. More bones, the scrap of meat followed and the dogs forgot the lad in their unaccustomed banquet.

"Feed em dey don't hoit," whispered Stubbs. "Say, I-n-jun dorgs ain't much different from Noo Yoik dawgs. De all falls fer de full stomach."

Stubbs continued on his way.

Like a shadow he wormed his way along. Not a leaf did he stir; not a twig did he displace. It was as neat a bit of woodcraft as any Indian ever essayed.

Once Stubbs glued himself to the earth. An Indian squaw hearing the snarling dogs came out of the tepee and stared into the murky point where the snarls of the dogs could be heard.

Stubbs hardly dared to breathe.

"Ugh! Dogs got weasel," Stubbs heard the woman mutter. Then she returned to the interior of the tent.

Finally Stubbs worked himself along side of the tepee. He raised one of the deer-skin flaps to the tent gently.

There were two women, five children, and a tiny papoose in the tent.

The children were grouped about a small fire built in the center of the tepee. It curled up with a tiny wreath of smoke to the top of the tepee where a round hole let out some of the smoke into the outer atmosphere.

The rest remained in the tepee but no one seemed to mind it. The center pole of the tepee was of hickory wood taken from the forest, but was covered by bits of tin, and old pieces of iron, evidently given to the Chief who owned the tepee by whites, or stolen from them.

This kept the tent pole from catching afire.

The Indian children were eating from a great iron pot. Stubbs could see each dirty hand dart into the pot, bring out some meat, and then the dainty would vanish down a little Indian throat.

The two women, dressed in long loose blouses of antelope skins, sewed together, and wearing leggings and gaily beaded moccasins were busy feeding the papoose, who was strapped on a flat-board, so it could not move, but its beady eyes were shining with eagerness and it ate lustily.

Right under Stubbs hand lay a pile of furs. All around the ground, the boy saw, was any amount of beautiful skins.

His rifle was all the Indian buck needed to get floor coverings that would make an Eastern millionaire green with envy.

"Dere's ermine, sable, gee ders Buffalo, mink, otter—hully gee, I don't know de name of half des furs," said Stubbs. "Say, dis Chief is de nifty one. Nottin' but de best for his feet to walk on—what?"

Stubbs saw right before him a splendid wolf skin "wid de head on" he whispered.

It was a study in silence to see the boy slowly draw, inch by inch, the wolf skin toward him.

It took him an hour to quietly, steadily extract the skin.

"Dere," he remarked when he at length had the skin in his possession. "I am all ready, all rightoh, to get me back to Hudson."

Without interruption, Stubbs crawled back to where Hudson stood a pery to conflicting emotions. He had wondered if he had been in the right to send the lad on such a dangerous mission.

He saw that he had by the victory of the boy who had returned with the wolf skin.

"Great work, Stubbs," Arthur Hudson said in glee. "You are going to be a great Indian fighter some day, and a great woodsman."

As this was the height of the ambition of the boy, his face was ablaze with satisfied pride.

"Now what next?" asked Hudson of himself.

For a time he paced back and forth lost in thought.

"I have it," he said. "Stubbs you are going to be the hero of this next epoch making historical trip."

"Wot?" said Stubbs suspiciously. The big words floored him.

"You are going to be a wolf."

"Aw, gwan."

"Sure."

"How?"

"Get into this robe."

Stubbs obeyed.

Hudson wrapped the robe about the boy's slight form and put the head over the back of Stubbs's head. This brought the dead grinning jaws of the wolf in line with the eye of any one looking at Stubbs; it gave him the appearance of a great howling, ravenous wolf, intent on getting food at any cost.

"Get down on all fours," commanded Hudson.

Stubbs obeyed.

The result was all that Hudson wished. Stubbs looked like a remarkably fierce wolf.

"Had I met you in the forest I'd have shot you for a wolf," laughed Hudson.

The dismay on the boy's face, showing beneath the fierce jaws of the wolf was so funny, that Hudson laughed again.

"Now dat you'se got de laugh on me, wot-te-ell am I to do?" questioned Stubbs.

"You are to work my plan to save myself, you and Miss Alma, as you say you want to do."

"How?"

"I want you to keep that wolf skin on. Get quietly over there way to the left where you see those shapes."

"Yis."

"Those uncanny shapes are the horses of the Haricart band stalked out there grazing during the night."

"Well."

"This band is too cute to have only a lake entrance. I think by the 50 or more Indian ponies, I see, and fifteen or twenty bronchos for the whites of the band, that there is an outlet through the timber, over this great mountain known to some of the leaders of the gang."

"Well."

"I want you to creep into the center of that bunch of horses and ponies."

"Sure."

"Then when you are there you jump up and down and run about. Can you howl like a wolf?"

"Say, wen I'm a losin' out at pitchin pennies de gang sez I howl like a wolf. I ain't no good loser. See?"

"Well, you think you are a loser this time—then if it makes you howl, you howl hard. Its our salvation."

"How de goodness does ye make dat out."

"An Indian broncho or pony is scared green at a wolf. It well knows from its colt days that a wolf will attack it and kill it for food any time. It's in deadly fear of a wolf. I want you to go in among that stock, play the wolf and stampede them."

"Wots dat?"

"That means that when they see you if you play your part well the entire lot of horses will break loose from their fastenings and run away as if old Nick was after them."

"Dat's what yer call a 'stamp-peed'?"

"Yes."

"Yer just watch. Ders going to be de woist stamp-peed yer ever saw in bout ten minutes."

Still clad in his wolf skin, Stubbs hurried off in the direction of the Indian's horses.

Soon Hudson could see that the stock were becoming uneasy.

He could hear the animals running hither and thither.

Horses soon began snorting with fear.

Hither and thither the frightened animals plunged.

Then clear and loud arose the howl of the great gray wolf, the terror of the North-Western territories.

With one mad plunge the entire band of horses tugged at their lariats, plucked the iron pins which tethered them from the ground, and in a wild, fearful mass of plunging hoofs, snorting nozzles, foam flecked bodies, the animals plunged into the forest.

The ruse was a success. The great stampede had been accomplished.

CHAPTER XII.

SAVED AT LAST.

"Its a stampede," yelled Jean-Tessier from underneath Alma Hampton's window.

He heard the cry of the supposed wolf, and saw the fearful rush of the entire stock of the camp into the forest quite as quickly as had Hudson.

Tessier's hail hurried from every tepee, and log-cabin the entire force in the camp.

"There are thirty-five men able bodied enough to fight," Hudson counted. "Well, its great odds but I guess we will win after all."

Stubbs had meanwhile rejoined him.

"Say, did I mek em run? My, but I'm de dandy woilf!" said Stubbs.

"You howled great," answered Hudson. "I almost thought that you were the real wolf."

"It made de horses fall fer me, any way," said Stubbs. "My but dey did run I never seen anytin' loike dot on de Bowery, in little ole' Noo Yoik."

The man and boy could hear Tessier's booming out orders from where they stood.

"Some of you Indians get around ahead of the stock," he roared. "Others follow behind. Try to corral them easy. If you don't they will kill themselves in the stampede. It's those pesky wolves again."

Hudson saw that his ruse had not been detected.

Soon the entire village so far as men folk were concerned were streaming through the woods after the plunging horses. Tessier, himself was heard booming along directing the work of the round up.

"He will be busy with his band until early morn," remarked Hudson. "Our way is clear to Alma."

Under the window of the girl both man and boy stopped.

"Is that you, Arthur?" Alma whispered.

"Yes."

"Thank God."

They heard the brave girl in the next breath quietly bolt the door to her room.

In a trice, Stubbs shinned up the side of the long log hut, and drew away the iron bar to Alma's window. It was a long jump for her to take but without hesitation, she leaped, landing breathless but happy in Hudson's arms.

"Aw break away dere," Stubbs said in a disgusted tone. "Dis ain't no time fer a courtin' bee. See?"

The couple became sane at once.

"What can we do now?" asked Alma. "I'm out of jail but we aren't much better than prisoners unless we can escape from here."

"We must take to the woods until night fall. Its then possible that we can get to the abandoned canoe which we found on the lake shore, and which gave Stubbs the chance to kill his 'foist' Indian."

Alma was then told quickly just what had happened since she was abducted.

Her amazement was great.

"Stubbs is surely the hero of this conspiracy," she laughed. "But we must not stop here. We must steal to the woods." Daylight was just breaking and Hudson saw that the girl's words were filled with wisdom.

"Hurry," he asserted. "Be quick."

As he turned the way was blocked by a huge form.

"Not so fast, my bold bucko, not so fast."

The speaker was Jean Tessier. His face was white with rage. In his hand was a gleaming revolver.

"Arthur Hudson," said Tessier with deadly menace, "you are going to die."

"Trapped," moaned Alma.

Stubbs vanished in the thicket like a wraith of a boy.

"Well, well," sneered Tessier. "You thought that I really believed that a wolf stampeded my cattle. What a fool you must have thought me."

"Didn't you think so?" replied Hudson opening his eyes wide. "Why, if you didn't I mistake you. Really, I begin to think you may have some brains. I did not give you credit for having any."

Tessier almost foamed at the mouth with anger.

"Well, I was next to a trick at once. I allowed that you would come here if I seemed to hurry off after the horses. So I rounded you and this girl up together. Pretty pair, ain't you?"

"Thanks" replied Hudson. "You flatter us."

"So far as you are concerned I'm going to shoot you now. After you are dead I will not wait for any clergyman. This girl will have to take some heed when she crosses my path. Tricked me, did you, you she devil?"

Alma's hand went to her eyes. She was crying, Tessier thought.

He glanced at her. Then he looked back at Hudson. His face was a study of a fiend for any painter.

But he did not see right behind him out of the brushes a long, coiling snake like thing, hissing and writhing as if alive.

It was a lariat which Stubbs had secured where one of the frightened horses had wrenched itself loose from it. Stubbs had coiled it up in North West fashion.

He was about to make a last cast for life of the impromptu lasso.

The twisted horse-hair rope loop writhed.

It sprang into the sky in a great leap.

Stubbs had made the cast.

Would it entangle Tessier?

The rope came flying down. One end wound itself far toward where Stubbs stood.

But the central loop settled with splendid aim about the head of Tessier.

Tessier was encircled by the rope. It slid down the thugs arms.

"I've got him," yelled Stubbs. "The fellow can't shoot yer."

The boy spoke the truth.

The revolver of Tessier was useless. He writhed and shook in his effort to get free.

But both Hudson and Alma rushed upon him together. Alma wrenched his weapon from the thug's hand. Hudson soon trussed him up a safe prisoner in the yards and yards of rope that the lariat made.

"Well, who is going to die now?" asked Hudson.

"Mercy," groaned Tessier.

"I'll have just as much mercy on you as you would have had on me," replied Hudson. "There is one thing more."

"What is it?" asked Alma.

"You remember the Road Agent who robbed the Fort Rae coach?"

"Yes."

"And the clue we found to his identity near the scene where he killed poor 'Keno' Phelps?"

"You mean the moccasin?"

"Yes."

"Well," asked Alma. "What of it?"

Hudson drew the moccasin from his pocket.

He fitted it deftly on Jean Tessier's foot.

"See! It fits perfectly," added Hudson. "Jean Tessier I charge you with being the Road Agent that held up the Fort Rae coach."

"Yes—I confess," groaned the cowardly man.

"I charge you with the murder of Phelps, the guard to the half million worth of treasure taken from the coach?"

Tessier groaned.

"Betrayed by a moccasin," he said as his head fell forward on his chest.

"He is guilty," cried Alma. "And Stubbs again have you saved the day."

Stubbs grinned his happiness.

"We must not delay here," snapped Hudson, "the Indian gang of smugglers may return at any moment."

"What can we do with Tessier?" asked Alma.

"Say dats easy," put in Stubbs. "Dere's a canoe down by de river bank. I knows how to run one o' 'em. Been ridin' in 'em lots-o-toime in Central Park, in me beloved Noo Yoik. Youse just carry dat feller to a canoe. I'll float him about till somethin' toins up. If he struggles he'll only tip us over. I can swim, but trussed up like de Christmas' turkey, he can't. Say, I ain't no life saver we! Tessier is a strugglin' in de water o' Great Slave Lake. See?"

Tessier snarled a curse at the brave Stubbs.

"It's pretty good advice," settled Hudson. "Let us carry Tessier to that vacant canoe."

It was no easy job. Tessier weighed about 180 pounds, but Hudson, Alma and Stubbs carried him finally to the canoe. After he had been tied to a thwart Stubbs plied the paddle and vanished into the fog that lay in the early morning on the lake. "What would we have done if it hadn't been for that boy," asked Hudson of Alma.

"His arrival in Yellow Knife was providential," the girl replied.

"It seems to me that we are in a fair way to get out of the toils of Tessier's gang," continued Hudson.

"Thanks to you—and Stubbs."

"Your father will escape from their clutches."

"I think he will. We have gotten only the man in Jean Tessier, but we ought to have the master."

"That means Chief Haricart?"

"Yes."

"He is the arch conspirator."

"He is."

"Wish we had him here."

"Who calls my name?" thundered a voice.

It was Chief Haricart.

Quick as a wink Hudson's revolver was covering the Sioux.

"You are my prisoner," said Hudson.

Except for a wildly beating pulse in the neck of the Indian his face was unmoved. Yet he knew that a single move with a man like Hudson pressing the trigger of a revolver with his finger, meant death.

"We have your ally and lieutenant, Jean Tessier under arrest," said Alma.

"Under arrest?" laughed Haricart. "Under arrest? By what authority do you dare to come here to my peaceful fishing tents, arrest my follower, an honest fisherman, Jean Tessier and hold me up at a revolver's mouth?"

Alma's heart sank. She saw the weak spot in her presence there. But she had faith in Hudson.

"Alma," said Hudson, "keep that brute well covered."

Alma raised her revolver. Haricart shrugged his shoulders. He knew he was caught.

Hudson fumbled in his pockets.

"A daughter of a smuggler himself, or the friend of smugglers. Bosh," said Haricart. "You a faro dealer—well, do you think that your evidence in any Canadian or American court would convict me of smuggling?"

"Possibly not," drawled Hudson. "But you see, you may have known me only as a faro dealer."

"Is that not what you are?" asked Haricart.

"Oh yes, I was that," replied Hudson, his eyes gleaming with merriment, "and I think I was a pretty good faro dealer at that."

"But a faro dealer can not arrest me," sneered Haricart.

"Certainly not," came slowly the reply from Hudson. "But I can, I, Captain Arthur Hudson, of the American Mounted Scouts."

"An American Scout," groaned Haricart. "I'm indeed lost."

Without a word he permitted Hudson to bind him with a rope he had found on the shores of the lake where a member of Haricart's band had dropped it.

"The American Scouts have certainly made this a great Round up of the Indian smugglers," added Haricart. "I am indeed a lost man."

"You are going to jail in Seattle for many a long year as a dangerous smuggler," said Hudson. "I have been trying to round your gang up for five years. About a year ago the Secret

Service Chief in Washington sent for me and asked me if I had not better give up my command on the Montana border and devote myself to a personal hunt for you in Canada, and through the great North-West. Permission to work in British North America was secured from the Canadian Government at Ottawa. I came here in the guise of a faro dealer. You know my career here."

"But, but, I don't know, really, but what am I in all this, if I find you aren't what I thought you were?" asked Alma almost in tears.

"Oh, you are Miss Alma Hampton, going to be the bride of Arthur Hudson, Captain in the American Mounted Scouts, before another night has fallen."

Alma blushed deeply.

"If I don't marry you when you ask me to, I'm afraid you will be changed into something else, so I had better yield gracefully."

Haricart looked up.

"Congratulations," he sneered. "But have you found the Road Agent?"

"Yes," replied Hudson. "It is Jean Tessier."

"I thought so."

"Did you have any knowledge of his attempt?"

"You ought to know I had not. In fact I rather tried my best not to have him hold up the stage coach. I wasn't looking for trouble with the Hudson Bay Company."

"If you can clear your skirts, very well," replied Hudson. "But Tessier will surely be executed for his killing of the guard, 'Keno' Phelps."

"I may have to go to jail for smuggling for a long term of imprisonment," replied Haricart, "but I wasn't fool enough to hold up a coach, murder a guard, the way my follower did. However, he is better dead than alive so far as I am concerned. You may hang him any time—for all of me."

"Oh look! Look out on the lake!"

Alma's cry turned all eyes lakeward.

There streaming in the center of the leading canoe was a great American flag.

Ahead of it paddling like mad came Stubbs, with Jean Tessier still bound in the canoe.

They could hear the shrieks of Stubbs clearly. Alma laughed in high pleasure.

"That's father in that canoe right behind Stubbs," she said. "He always unfurls Old Glory when he is out on a mission that pleases him. Even up here in Canada he always observes the American holidays—and Fourth-of-July means extra noise, extra drinks all around, and the unfurling of the American flag to the Canadian breeze."

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" yelled Hudson, "doesn't the flag thrill you when you have been out from under its folds a while. God bless the American flag."

"Amen to that," rejoined Alma.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

Jean Tessier was soon trussed up in the house where Alma had so lately been a prisoner. Beside him sat Chief Haricart, a greatly crestfallen Sioux.

"Old Bill" Hampton, was leading what seemed to Hudson and Alma to be the entire population of Yellow Knife.

There were 100 canoes each holding two people and this about made up all the adult population of the tough little hamlet.

"We had no trouble in getting over the boiling geyser," "Old Bill" told Hudson. "We just followed your directions."

The members of the Haricart gang were easily rounded up. Hardly a shot had to be fired by the rescuing party. The Indians and white men, when they knew that Haricart and Tessier were prisoners of Captain Arthur Hudson, of the American Mounted Scouts had no courage to fight.

They did not propose to remain in the wilderness either, after their commanders had been captured. They gave themselves up so quietly that Hudson could hardly believe his eyes.

"They are thoroughly cowed," Hudson said to Alma. "We have broken up the great Haricart gang at last."

The prisoners were locked in the same room where Alma had so lately been a prisoner. Tessier cursed his captors when Hudson had him carried into the room in which he had so insulted the girl.

When the lower floors were searched the loot of the smugglers was found to be far in excess of anything that Hudson had imagined. It was worth millions of dollars.

"And, look here," Hudson yelled, "here's the steel treasure box. It has not been opened yet. I suppose Tessier secreted it here expecting to open it at his leisure. Well, we made the pace so hot that he never even had a look at the ill gotten gains for which he committed a foul murder to gain."

"What's this?" asked "Old Bill," when he heard the story from Alma that Hudson was not as all had supposed, a mere gambler, but was really an officer of the bravest organization on the American frontier, the American Mounted Scouts.

"Are you really one of the Mounted Scouts?" "Old Bill" asked Hudson.

"I am, and am further on special duty under sanction of the American Secret Service Bureau at Washington to round up this gang," replied Hudson.

"Old Bill" laughed.

"Look here," he said.

Then he handed Hudson a document.

"Why this is your commission as a member of the American Secret Police," gasped Hudson. "It's dated back ten years. That was about the time I think, that you came to Yellow Knife."

"That's why I came," simply replied "Old Bill" Hampton. "I've been the Secret Service agent in this country for years. That is why so many gangs of smugglers have been rooted out. I've worked with them, as you have done, and have thus served my country as you have done, but in a humbler way."

"Then there is no reason why we should not now go to the States to live?" cried Alma.

"None," remarked "Old Bill." "My days as head of the Bank Exchange are over. Burn up this camp of Tessier's and Haricart's as soon as you have shipped their plunder to Yellow Knife."

"Oh the Star spangled banner,

Long may it wave,"

Stubbs shrieked these words.

"Over Captain and Mrs. Arthur Hudson, 'Old Bill' Hampton, and Stubbs, of Noo Yolk," the boy added loudly. "Hurrah. Dey is one t'ing more. You Jean Tessier dere—I wants ter say dat I indemnifies yer as he Road Agent dat killed me frien' 'Keno' Phelps. I was de only passenger in dat coach. I didn't tell Mr. Hudson dere by de coach after yer robbed de game dat I knowed yer. But I don't have nuttin' ter fear now. Yer can't pot me. See. Yer de feller dat robbed de Fort Rae coach."

"Well, you will hang for that murder, I feel sure," said Hudson.

Tessier's face was livid with fear and rage.

"When I get through telling what I know about you Chief Haricart," Tessier hissed, "there will be two men die on the gallows."

Haricart fell back in a dead faint.

"Now for the States," cried Alma.

"And fer de good old American flag," cried Stubbs. "Hurrah."



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